

# IRAN'S PROXY WAR AGAINST AMERICA



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# FOREWORD

The Claremont Institute's National Security Studies are devoted to the serious discussion of what will be required to defend the United States and the West. Our Declaration of Independence teaches that government is instituted among men to secure life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The Constitution's injunction to provide for the "common defense" requires a vigorous and vigilant approach to national security. American foreign policy dedicated to the security of the interests and rights of its citizens requires not only informed and prudent statesmanship, but also a responsible citizenry that is engaged in the national discussion about friends and foes. It is in this tradition of spirited self-government that we publish these studies.

Iran has long been one of the leading state sponsors of terrorism worldwide. Iran's ruling mullahs are extending their regional influence in the fog of the Iraq conflict. Their pursuit of nuclear weapons and a robust ballistic missile capability also continues apace. Thomas Joscelyn argues that Iran is guilty of far more. An emboldened Iran has vicariously waged war against America for nearly three decades, yet America's leaders are unwilling to admit

what is plain for all to see.

Because of our reluctance to confront this terrorist state openly, we are losing ground on a vital front in our war against radical Islam. Through careful analysis of open sources, Joscelyn explains both the intelligence establishment's misreading of history and the numerous but unfounded assumptions by today's elite concerning Iran and its link to terrorist operations.

One of the most damaging and unwarranted assumptions made is that sectarian differences within Islam should prevent cooperation in operations against the West. A brief look at the evidence shows that Iran and others have had no trouble in putting aside differences in theology to harm their enemies, especially America. Specific links include the Iranian connection to al-Qaeda in the Sudan, a partnership brokered by Hassan al-Turabi, one-time leader of Sudan's ruling party, the National Islamic Front. Next, there is Imad Mugnyah, Hezbollah's master terrorist, who helped Osama bin Laden upgrade al-Qaeda's capabilities in the early 1990s. The 1996 Khobar Towers bombing, long suspected to be the handiwork of Hezbollah under direction from Iran, may also have had a junior partner in al-Qaeda. The 9/11 Commission established that the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania were the work of Hezbollah-trained al-Qaeda operatives. There are disturbing signs that may implicate Iran in, at the very least, facilitating travel for some of the 9/11 hijackers. Finally, there is extensive evidence that Iran aided al-Qaeda's retreat from Afghanistan in late 2001 and has allowed al-Qaeda agents to operate from Iranian soil ever since.

Recognizing this pattern is a prerequisite to restoring a sound policy towards Iran. We must be honest about Iran's past actions over the last three decades. We must also publicly investigate Iran and Hezbollah's possible involvement in 9/11 and other al-Qaeda attacks. Evidence not harmful to current national security assets or strategy should be declassified. We should demand that Iran turn over any al-Qaeda fighters seeking refuge on Iranian soil. Finally, we should set about the business of devising a broad and

coherent strategy for confronting Iran. How we go about meeting the Iranian threat is open for debate, but we cannot hope to resolve this vital issue by continuing to pretend that Iran does not play a large role in the terrorists' ongoing war against America.

The American regime has faced down larger and more formidable foes than Iran, Hezbollah, and al-Qaeda. But in an age of increasing technological sophistication, it is irresponsible to sit idly by while threats gather and foreign actors are allowed to carry out acts of war. The way forward requires prudence, clear strategic thinking, and statesmanship. Thomas Joscelyn's compelling case that we must first open our eyes is a vital contribution to what we hope will be a new direction for American foreign policy.

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# 1. BLIND SPOT

On the morning of September 11, 2001, America awoke to an enemy she hardly knew. Osama bin Laden had declared war on America years before. His network of terrorists had carried out, or attempted, scores of attacks on American interests around the globe—including some inside the continental United States. For most Americans, however, al-Qaeda's terror was something that happened over there—in the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia or some other far away land. That all changed when four commercial airliners were turned into weapons of mass murder in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania.

In the years since, America has scrambled to learn about an enemy capable of striking her political and economic nerve centers. In the process, many misconceptions have been shed. Initially, for example, it was thought that bin Laden funded his terror empire out of a large \$300 million inheritance—Osama's cut of his father's Saudi construction conglomerate. As it turned out, bin Laden's personal wealth was greatly exaggerated. While bin Laden is certainly a wealthy man, his familial stipend was only \$1 million per year, or far less than the amount required to fund al-Qaeda's operations. In reality, al-Qaeda is funded by a complicated web of Islamic chari-

ties and illicit activities.<sup>1</sup>

Another early myth concerned bin Laden's lair in Afghanistan. Less than three months after 9/11, the press reported that bin Laden was sequestered inside a high-tech bunker in the impenetrable mountains of Afghanistan. Bin Laden's hideaway was supposedly equipped with hydroelectric power, a ventilation system, and other amenities. But as Edward Jay Epstein has pointed out, the James Bond-like complex was a "fictoid."<sup>2</sup> Outside the minds of a few journalists and one dubious source, it never existed.

While these myths have been dispelled, others remain. No fallacy today is more misguided or more dangerous than the widespread belief that Iran, the world's premier state sponsor of terrorism, and al-Qaeda are *not* allies in the terrorists' war against the West. A corollary myth holds that Hezbollah—Iran's terrorist proxy and the "A-team" of international terrorist organizations—has also not allied itself with al-Qaeda.<sup>3</sup> Both memes are rooted in the belief that religious and ideological differences preclude sustained cooperation between the Shiites of Iran and Hezbollah, and the Sunnis of al-Qaeda.

A July 2006 cover story in *Time* magazine titled "Why the Middle East Crisis Isn't Really About Terrorism" illustrates just how entrenched these beliefs have become.<sup>4</sup> A war was then raging between the major Palestinian terrorist groups (backed by Iran) and Israel. But *Time* sought to distance the conflict from America's "war on terror." In the wake of 9/11, *Time* explained, President George W. Bush declared that the war on terrorism would not be limited to al-Qaeda, but would extend to "every terrorist group of global reach." *Time* conceded that Iran's Hezbollah "can certainly be said to fit in that category." Given America's limited resources, however, "it may make sense to limit our hit list to the groups that actually threaten us." And Hezbollah "does not now do that." The article also admitted that there may have been some cooperation between Hezbollah and al-Qaeda at some point in the past, but "the two groups certainly aren't allies." The magazine denounced the Bush Administration's "connect the dots" approach to terrorism, which

only confused our enemy's identity. And while America may have diverse interests in the region, such as protecting her ally Israel in the war against Hezbollah, "many of them have nothing to do with global terrorism." *Time* concluded, "Five years into [the war on terror] a lot of Americans are understandably perplexed about just what it is."

On that last score, the magazine got it very right. Articles like *Time's* cover story have certainly sown a lot of confusion. On nearly everything else, however, it could not have been more wrong.

But *Time* is not alone. Six years after 9/11, the consensus among America's most influential counterterrorism analysts is that Iran and its terrorist appendages have had little to do with al-Qaeda. Long ago the U.S. intelligence community came to believe that al-Qaeda posed a new threat, comprised of "loosely affiliated" extremists bound solely by ideology and lacking any significant state backing. Whereas it was previously believed that terrorism was the provenance of state actors, in the 1990s a handful of counterterrorism officials serving on President Bill Clinton's National Security Council and in the U.S. intelligence community came to believe that al-Qaeda's terrorism was substantively different.

For example, Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, who both served on Clinton's National Security Council, assert in their widely acclaimed book *The Age of Sacred Terror*: "There is *still* little evidence that state sponsors [of terrorism] like Iraq or Iran provided al-Qaeda with meaningful assistance...."<sup>5</sup> For the former Clinton NSC staffers, such support would not be consistent with the "caution" Tehran has displayed in selecting terrorists to sponsor.<sup>6</sup>

Paul Pillar, formerly one of the CIA's chief counterterrorism analysts, holds the same opinion. While he concedes that Iran has played a prominent role in fomenting Palestinian terrorism, Pillar believes Iran has "reduced its involvement in other forms of terrorist activity."<sup>7</sup> For Pillar, Iran has not played a major role—if any at all—in al-Qaeda's rise.



Kenneth Pollack, who is also a former CIA analyst and National Security Council staffer, and whose work on Iran has earned widespread currency, likewise dismisses the idea that Iran and al-Qaeda have colluded in any significant way. Pollack believes the evidence tying Iran to al-Qaeda adds up to mere “flirtation.” In his book, *The Persian Puzzle*, Pollack surmises that the “Iranians have enough stored hatred for al-Qa’eda that it seems unlikely they would forge a strategic alliance with them—unless the United States launched a full-scale assault on Iran....”<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the conventional wisdom has settled: Iran and al-Qaeda remain antagonistic forces that can only be united by American provocation. Answering al-Qaeda’s challenge is a discrete issue, separate from Iran’s misdeeds. It would be a mistake, therefore, for America’s leaders to conflate the two. These ardent foes of America have little, or nothing, to do with each other.

Some experts go even further and deny not only any relationship between Iran and al-Qaeda but even deny Iranian actions against the U.S. According to former Clinton Administration officials, Iran stopped sponsoring anti-American terrorism in June 1996, after the Iranian-sponsored attack on the Khobar Towers apartment complex in Saudi Arabia. Richard Clarke and Steven Simon, for example, claim that the U.S. intelligence community was able to scare Iran out of the anti-American terrorism business through covert action.<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Pollack agrees. In *The Persian Puzzle*, he writes: “To our knowledge, Iran has not attacked us again, directly or indirectly, since.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, the dominant school of thinking inside America’s foreign policy establishment and intelligence community is that Iran has not been an active participant in the terrorists’ war against America since the mid-1990s.

The facts, however, tell a different story. Indeed, six years into the “war on terror,” America has no bigger blind spot. The purpose of this essay is to expose this ongoing intelligence failure.

The Khomeini cult that rules Iran today has been openly at war with America since 1979. Incredibly, America has never responded. Ruled by a clerical regime conceived with the goal of bringing

“Death to America,” Tehran has orchestrated spectacular terrorist attacks against the U.S. for decades. (A timeline of Iran’s anti-American terrorist activities is included as an Appendix.)

Many of the operations have been carried out by the regime’s terrorist proxies. Hezbollah, a terrorist group based in Lebanon with a worldwide reach, was the pioneer of terrorism against the U.S.<sup>11</sup> The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, a group of fanatics loyal to Iran’s hardliners, has also played a substantial role in carrying out the regime’s deadly designs around the globe. And through these intermediaries, Iran has allied with terrorists of all stripes, including al-Qaeda.

In fact, contrary to widespread opinion, Iran has been a vital ally for bin Laden’s international terrorist organization. The evidence is overwhelming. The bulk of this essay presents that evidence under the following broad categories:

### *Outside the Box*

It is frequently argued that ideological differences preclude sustained cooperation between the Shiites of Iran and the Sunnis of al-Qaeda. The fundamental split between their competing versions of Islam, caused by a medieval disagreement over the proper line of succession from the Prophet Mohammed, is thought to be insurmountable. This belief stems not from an in-depth knowledge of Islam’s history, but from a deep ignorance of our terrorist enemies. In fact, Iran has consistently allied itself with ideologically diverse players throughout the Middle East and the world, including prominent Sunni Muslim terrorist organizations. When it comes to confronting the West, the leading Sunni terrorists have also proven to be remarkably tolerant of their Shiite brethren.

### *Melting Pot of Terror*

Of Iran’s Sunni allies, one is noteworthy above all others: Hassan al-Turabi. During the 1990s, al-Turabi was the de facto leader

of Sudan's ruling party, the National Islamic Front. In the wake of the first Gulf War, he sought to unite the Muslim world against a common foe: the United States of America. In the process, al-Turabi's Sudan—then the world's only Sunni Islamist state—forged a strategic alliance with Iran. Al-Turabi also played host to the world's leading terrorist organizations, including Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda and Iran's Hezbollah. In 1991, bin Laden and al-Qaeda relocated to Sudan from their safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It was during bin Laden's time in Sudan that al-Qaeda evolved from an Afghani-based insurgency group into an international terrorist empire. As part of al-Turabi's grand vision, Iran, Sudan and al-Qaeda began jointly exporting terrorism around the globe. They were united by the common goal of driving America out of the Middle East.

### *A Match Made in Hell*

It was during bin Laden's time in Sudan that he first met Imad Mugniyah, Iran's and Hezbollah's master terrorist. Since the early 1980s, Mugniyah has been implicated in most, if not all, of Iran's major anti-American terrorist operations. His "accomplishments" include the infamous 1983 U.S. embassy bombing in Beirut and a series of devastating follow-on attacks, which drove the U.S. out of Lebanon. During the early 1990s, bin Laden sought and received Mugniyah's assistance in transforming al-Qaeda's capabilities. With Mugniyah's help, al-Qaeda acquired Hezbollah's most lethal tactics, including the use of suicide bombers.

### *Khobar Towers: A Joint Operation?*

In June 1996, Hezbollah terrorists, acting under direct orders from senior Iranian government officials, bombed the Khobar Towers apartment complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The building housed American service men and women responsible for maintaining the no-fly zones over Saddam Hussein's Iraq. There

has never been any serious dispute over Iran's role. What is rarely acknowledged, however, is that there are also good reasons to suspect that bin Laden's terrorists were also involved in the attack.

*Mugniyah's Fingerprints: al-Qaeda's August 1998 Embassy Bombings*

While there remains some uncertainty concerning the attack on Khobar Towers, Iran's and Hezbollah's involvement in al-Qaeda's most successful attack prior to 9/11 is clear. According to al-Qaeda's own terrorists, Hezbollah trained the al-Qaeda operatives responsible for the August 7, 1998, U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. There is even evidence that Iran provided al-Qaeda with a large amount of explosives used in the attack. Today, Iran continues to harbor some of the terrorists responsible.

*See No Evil: Iran and 9/11*

The most disturbing evidence tying Iran to al-Qaeda are reports that suggest possible cooperation on the September 11 attacks. Longtime CIA field operative Bob Baer, who had tracked Mugniyah for more than a decade, immediately suspected that Iran's master terrorist had played a role. Two years after Baer first published his suspicions, the 9/11 Commission uncovered evidence of Mugniyah's and Iran's complicity. Shortly before the Commission's final report was to be published, the Commission's staff unearthed a cache of documents demonstrating that Hezbollah and Iran had facilitated the hijackers' travels. The Commission left the matter open for further investigation, but more than three years later no such inquiry has been launched.

*Al-Qaeda's Great Escape*

As American forces invaded Afghanistan in late 2001, Iran assisted the flight of hundreds of high-level Taliban members and al-Qaeda terrorists through western Afghanistan into Iran. Many

of them still reside in Iran today. Among the al-Qaeda terrorists still in Iran are Saif al-Adel, the man thought to be al-Qaeda's third highest ranking leader, and Saad bin Laden, Osama's son. From Iranian soil, they have continued to order terrorist attacks. Other evidence points to Iran's assistance for al-Qaeda operatives who eventually fled to Iraq as well.

The war on terror is far from over. While America dealt al-Qaeda a heavy blow in the months immediately following the 9/11 attacks, the terrorist organization has regrouped—with Iranian help. It would be a crucial mistake for America's leaders to continue pretending that Iran plays no role in al-Qaeda's operations. This paper culminates in a set of five key recommendations. First and foremost, American policymakers need to recognize and deal with the realities of Iran's persistent assault. We cannot hope to win this war without first acknowledging Iran's attacks on Americans around the globe.

## 2. OUTSIDE THE BOX

*I ask my Muslim brothers in general and the callers and Mujahideen and their media organizations in particular to highlight the concept of Islamic brotherhood and disown all partisanship, loyalties and animosities based on nationalism, and I ask them not to allow the wrongdoing of a faction or entity motivate them to speak evil of that party's entire people or race.*

—Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in a videotaped message released February 2007<sup>1</sup>

Many terrorism analysts maintain that Iran's Shiites and al-Qaeda's Sunnis could not possibly overcome the historical enmity between their competing brands of Islam.<sup>2</sup> Thus, even though both parties have long shared the same list of enemies—e.g., America, Israel, and Hosni Mubarak's Egyptian regime—sustained cooperation is thought to be impossible. This line of thinking is rampant inside the U.S. intelligence community and among America's counterterrorism experts.

The terrorists America confronts today, however, do not behave like textbook automatons. The crude caricatures of Shiites and Sun-

nis many prefer are not accurate renderings of reality. A better way to think about our enemies has been put forth by Michael Ledeen, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a long-time expert on Middle Eastern terrorism. Ledeen has likened our foes to mafia families.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes they feud over localized turf disputes, but when confronted by an outside enemy they are certainly capable of lethal collusion. Another useful analogy has been proposed by the former CIA director James Woolsey. Woolsey, unlike many of his former colleagues in the U.S. intelligence community, has long argued that terrorists sometimes engage in “joint ventures.”<sup>4</sup> In his view, terrorists and their allies can and do pool their resources, similar to the way corporate competitors sometimes do, in order to accomplish common goals. Competition for supremacy in one area does not preclude cooperation in others.

Either way of characterizing America's terrorist enemies is helpful when considering Iran's history of sponsoring Sunni terrorist groups. Iran has not inflexibly allowed ideological or religious differences to rule out any alliance with or aid to a terrorist group. Shiites are a religious minority in the Islamic world, accounting for only 1 out of every 10 Muslims. Given this demographic disadvantage, the Khomeini cult long ago recognized the limits of its power. If Iran were to enter alliances strictly on ideological grounds, then it would quickly find itself severely outnumbered.

Tehran has therefore joined forces with diverse parties throughout the Middle East.<sup>5</sup> Iran's decades-long alliance with the Assad family's secular, Baathist regime in Syria is sufficient to disprove the thesis that ideological or intra-Muslim religious concerns trump all else. In fact, the mullahs have sponsored terrorists of all stripes, from secular Marxists to Sunni Islamists, in Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey, Somalia, Southeast Asia, Sudan, the Palestinian-controlled territories, and Iraq. Common interests, such as the overthrow of secular Arab regimes, have frequently been sufficient to unite Iran with even the most fervent Sunni Islamist terrorist groups.

The Muslim Brotherhood, the ideological mother for most Sunni terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda, has also consistently

crossed ideological boundaries in order to further its broader goals. Established in Egypt in 1928 by an Arabic language teacher named Hassan al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood's goal is to reclaim "Islam's manifest destiny" and to re-establish the Islamic "empire, founded in the seventh century," which "stretched from Spain to Indonesia."<sup>6</sup> Importantly, al-Banna's radical vision included a place for Islam's Shiite minority.

For al-Banna, the differences between Sunnis and Shiites paled in comparison to the differences between Muslims and the West. In the 1940s, he joined a group of preeminent Islamic scholars in calling for Sunnis and Shiites to set aside their differences.<sup>7</sup> According to al-Banna, Islam's enemies sought to exploit its internal rivalries. If Muslims were to reclaim their rightful mantle, then they would have to overcome their doctrinal differences. Al-Banna's heirs even allied the Muslim Brotherhood with a prominent Iranian Shiite scholar named Nawab Safawi. After the pro-Western Shah came to power in 1953, al-Banna's students invited Safawi to a conference in Egypt. The Shiite cleric was hoisted upon their Sunni shoulders and hailed as one their leaders.<sup>8</sup>

As the Khomeini cult rose to power in Iran in 1979, radical Sunni Islam gained strength in Egypt. Two major Sunni Islamist terrorist groups grew out of al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood: Shaykh Omar Abd al-Rahman's Gama'at al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group, or IG) and Ayman al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ). Both of these groups drew inspiration from the Iranian revolution. As Islamist fervor gripped Egypt, pictures of Khomeini were prominently featured throughout the nation.<sup>9</sup> The IG and the EIJ voiced their support for the Iranian revolution and objected to the Egyptian government's endorsement of the deposed Shah. For the Sunni Islamists of Egypt, the success of the Khomeini revolution gave them hope that they too could depose a secular government and install a radical Islamic regime. In 1981, the EIJ and IG conspired to assassinate Anwar Sadat, the secular president of Egypt.

Ayman al-Zawahiri, who led the uprising against Anwar Sadat's regime and would later go on to become al-Qaeda's number two,



used the Iranian revolution as model for his own endeavors. In *The Looming Tower*, investigative journalist Lawrence Wright explains that al-Zawahiri planned a coup in Egypt in 1990. "Zawahiri had studied the 1979 overthrow of the Shah of Iran," Wright explains, "and he sought training from the Iranians." In exchange, al-Zawahiri offered the Iranians sensitive information "about an Egyptian government plan to storm several islands in the Persian Gulf that both Iran and the United Arab Emirates lay claim to."<sup>10</sup> The Iranians paid al-Zawahiri \$2 million for the information and trained his operatives for the coup attempt, which was ultimately aborted.

Another of al-Banna's ideological heirs, Yasser Arafat, was an on-again, off-again ally of Iran. Arafat joined the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood at a young age. Even though he is widely thought of as a secular leader, Arafat never abandoned his Islamist roots. He frequently peppered his rhetoric with Islamist phrases and slogans and maintained close ties to Palestinian radical Islamists. Even before Khomeini's cult rose to power, Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) allied with the Ayatollah. During the earliest stages of the Iranian revolution, Arafat's operatives trained Khomeini's terrorist forces.<sup>11</sup> Their relationship lasted for decades. One of Arafat's most trusted bodyguards, Imad Mugnyyah, even went on to become Iran's chief terrorist.

Iran has consistently backed the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a Sunni Islamist terrorist group.<sup>12</sup> And the history of still another Palestinian terrorist group, Hamas, demonstrates just how easily ideological differences and even contests for regional hegemony can be overlooked in favor of shared interests. Like Arafat, Hamas has a deep and longstanding connection to al-Banna's Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas's 1988 covenant explicitly defines the group as "one of the wings of Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine." At various times since its founding, Hamas has received financial support and other aid from Saudi Arabia, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and Iran. All three of those states have opposed or warred with each other throughout their recent history, yet they found common cause with Hamas in opposition to Israel.<sup>13</sup>

Iran has long funded and trained Hamas's terrorists. And in more recent years, Hamas has drawn even closer to Tehran. After Hamas won control of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in January 2006, Western countries (led by the U.S.) threatened to cut off the PA's United Nations funding. Iran stepped in to save Hamas by pledging its financial assistance. Iran's supreme leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini, publicly called on all Muslim nations to express their solidarity with Hamas against the "occupier regime" of Israel.<sup>14</sup>

In sum, history is replete with examples of Iran allying with Sunni terrorist groups. Sunni terrorists, including al-Qaeda's own Ayman al-Zawahiri, have also proven willing to seek Iran's support for their endeavors. The assumption that Shiites and Sunnis are incapable of cooperation is false—as are the corollaries that al-Qaeda will not work with Iran, or that Iran never supports Sunni terror. But of all Iran's Sunni allies, one individual played an especially prominent role in bringing together Iran and al-Qaeda: Sudan's Hassan al-Turabi.



### 3. MELTING POT OF TERROR

*America incarnates the devil for Muslims. When I say Muslims, I mean all the Muslims in the world.*

—Hassan al-Turabi, a close ally of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the mullahs' Iran, and Osama bin Laden's friend and one-time benefactor, as quoted in an interview with the Associated Press (1997)

There is no better example of how easily America's terrorist enemies have overcome ideological differences than the alliance between Sudan and Iran in the 1990s. It would not be an overstatement to say that the strategic partnership between the two terrorist sponsoring states, one Sunni and the other Shiite, altered the course of history. It was in Sudan in the early 1990s that al-Qaeda's terrorist network took shape. And to understand how Iran played an integral part in the rise of bin Laden's terrorist empire, we must first consider the vision of an apocalyptic Islamist revolutionary named Hassan al-Turabi.<sup>1</sup>

Like other prominent Islamists, al-Turabi received a secular education that seemed to prepare him for a prosperous career. Born

in 1932, he studied law at the University of Khartoum, then at the University of London and, finally, at the Sorbonne in Paris. But after leaving Paris and returning to Sudan in the mid-1960s, he joined a subsidiary organization of the Muslim Brotherhood and quickly became one of its most prominent leaders. By that time, al-Banna's society of Muslim Brothers had spread not only throughout Egypt and across its southern border into Sudan, but also around the globe.<sup>2</sup>

After tensions arose between the Sudanese government and the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1960s, al-Turabi was arrested and spent much of the next decade in prison, and then in exile. He reconciled with the Sudanese government in 1979 and returned to become the country's attorney general. In the early 1980s he was instrumental in establishing a strict version of *sharia* in parts of the country, complete with exceedingly harsh punishments for even menial crimes.

Civil war plagued Sudan throughout the 1980s and power changed hands several times. In 1989, al-Turabi, along with the current Sudanese president General Omar al-Bashir, staged a coup that brought their National Islamic Front to power. Al-Turabi was free to create the type of radical Islamist state he had always envisioned.

Multilingual, charismatic, and Western-educated, al-Turabi was adept at feigning approval for a tolerant version of Islam in the company of Western journalists and foreign dignitaries. He frequently claimed to believe that women deserved a greater degree of equality throughout the Muslim world and that democracy was not inconsistent with the fundamental teachings of the Koran. Desperate for an influential partner in the Muslim world, Westerners were initially fooled by al-Turabi's rhetoric. In the early 1990s, the Vatican reached out to al-Turabi as a potential partner in mediating disputes between the Christian and Muslim worlds. In October 1993, al-Turabi visited Pope John Paul II in Rome.<sup>3</sup> Washington, too, was fooled. Al-Turabi was invited to speak at an influential Washington-based think tank and even before Congress.<sup>4</sup>

But al-Turabi's self-avowed moderation was a ruse, a veil cover-

ing his deeper, more radical beliefs. In reality, he believed in the inevitability of a Manichean clash between Islam and the forces of evil, represented by Western civilization. As he made clear, “whatever the West will do, Islam will still ultimately overcome.”<sup>5</sup> And early in his tenure as the new leader of Sudan, al-Turabi was afforded a unique opportunity to bring his designs to fruition.

Al-Turabi’s rise to power coincided with an event that sent shockwaves throughout the Islamic world: the first Gulf War. For the West, the war was fought to reverse an unjust conquest that threatened oil supplies and destabilized the Middle East. But that is not how the war was perceived by many fundamentalist Muslims and on the so-called “Arab street.” For many in the Muslim world, the war represented a Western invasion and occupation of Islam’s holy soil and its holiest shrines in Mecca and Medina. That U.S. Air Force bases were stationed far away from Islam’s spiritual centers and no armed Americans ever stepped foot inside Muslim holy sites did not matter. The presence of Western armies in Arabia was simply an abomination to many Muslims.

The Saudi royal family’s decision to allow American forces on the Arabian Peninsula would fundamentally change the region. Islamic clerics immediately debated the decision. Saudi-backed clerics, at the behest of their patrons, issued *fatwas* (holy edicts) justifying the presence of American forces. Other clerics throughout the region denounced the move and foreswore the Saudi petrodollars that had been their lifeblood; the thought of Christian “crusaders” in Arabia was simply too much for them to bear.

The legitimacy of the Saudi royal family, which had successfully fended off a Shiite claim to their throne by squashing a Shiite insurrection in 1979, was once again drawn into question. But this time Saudi legitimacy was being questioned even by some of the most zealous Sunni Wahhabis, including Osama bin Laden and his Arab Afghans, who had traveled from their home countries throughout the Middle East to Afghanistan to fight against the Soviets during the 1980’s. Al-Turabi used the wave of anti-Saudi and anti-Western sentiments to forge a new terrorist alliance, with bin

Laden's al-Qaeda as its spearhead. Indeed, the story of al-Qaeda's transformation from an Afghani-based insurgency group into an international terrorist empire begins in al-Turabi's Sudan.

In April 1991, only weeks after the conclusion of the Gulf War, Hassan al-Turabi began hosting the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference. The conference was a direct challenge to Saudi Arabia's traditional role as the Islamists' patron and Sudan continued to host the conference semi-regularly throughout the 1990s. (Baghdad and Tehran held similar conferences as well.) The purpose of the conference was to unite all Muslims—Shiite and Sunni, “secular” and Islamist—under a single anti-Western banner. Only in this manner could the Islamic community force the foreign “crusaders” from Muslim soil.

Writing about the first such conference in *Foreign Affairs*, Judith Miller explained that its purpose was to aid al-Turabi's “long-standing goal of overcoming the historic rift between Sunni Muslim states, like Sudan, and a Shiite state, like Iran.”<sup>6</sup> Like his ideological ancestor Hassan al-Banna, al-Turabi believed that the historical differences between Sunnis and Shiites were not part of Islam.<sup>7</sup> According to Miller, he also used the conference to “fuse formerly secular Arab nationalist movements [like the Baathist movement in Iraq and Syria], which have dominated Arab politics . . . with the increasingly more seductive and influential groups espousing the new Islamic rhetoric.”<sup>8</sup>

The conference ushered in al-Turabi's open door policy for all Arabs and Muslims and his Sudan quickly became a terrorist incubator. Representatives from almost every Middle Eastern-based terrorist group set up shop, including Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and the Abu Nidal Organization (long-sponsored by Saddam's Iraq). Several of the various constituencies which would become part of what we now know as “al-Qaeda,” including bin Laden himself, also established a presence. Hundreds of the Arab Afghans relocated from Afghanistan to their new home in Sudan.

Al-Turabi's hospitality to all of these parties earned him the title

“The Pope of Terrorism” in the European press and, in short order, his terrorist coalition began to wreak havoc. Governments all over the African continent were invaded. Algeria, Egypt, Uganda, Eritrea, and Ethiopia as well as several other African nations routinely complained of al-Turabi’s influence over Islamist radicals within their borders.<sup>9</sup> Numerous bombings and assassination attempts all led back to Khartoum’s conspicuous guests. For example, terrorists receiving Sudanese assistance attempted to assassinate Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak in Ethiopia in June 1995.<sup>10</sup>

Al-Turabi’s new terrorist network even managed to strike at the heart of America. On February 26, 1993, terrorists detonated a massive truck bomb under the World Trade Center. The attack killed six people and wounded hundreds more. A follow-up attack against major landmarks in New York City was planned as well, but was foiled by the FBI. The terrorists involved in both had numerous ties to al-Turabi’s Sudan.<sup>11</sup>

The cornerstone of al-Turabi’s new terrorist coalition was his nation’s relationship with Iran. The two countries worked hand in glove to export terrorism. As *The New York Times* explained in January 1992, al-Turabi’s Sudan and the mullahs’ Iran were “orchestrating...the spread of fundamentalism to the moderate Arab countries and the rest of Africa.” Sudan was an “ideal springboard for Islamic fundamentalism in Arab countries and Africa.” Although “Sudan’s economic disarray would normally disqualify it as the springboard for anything,” al-Turabi “solved this problem by bringing in the Iranians, who are helping out on many fronts, from oil to military training.”<sup>12</sup>

An anonymous senior Clinton Administration official explained Iran’s reasoning behind the relationship to *The New York Times* in August 1993: “Take out a map and look at it. From the Iranian point of view, Sudan is strategically located: south to Africa, north and west to Egypt and North Africa. It gives the Iranians a strategic toehold, which can help promote its revolutionary cause in Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan itself and south.”<sup>13</sup> Another *New York Times* piece in June 1993 placed terrorism at the heart of the “strategic



alliance.”<sup>14</sup> Iran was training “Sudanese and Arab fundamentalists to form vanguard Muslim militias.” Experts warned that “several hundred Iranian Revolutionary Guards [IRGC] have located themselves in a score of training camps throughout the Sudan.” The IRGC was using Sudan “as a bridge in an effort to export Islamic revolution to countries of the Middle East, particularly those ruled by secular, pro-Western governments like that of Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak.”<sup>15</sup>

Majid Kamal, the Iranian ambassador to Khartoum, oversaw Iran’s terrorist forces in Sudan. According to the State Department, he “was involved in the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979 and played a leading role in developing Hezbollah in the 1980s.”<sup>16</sup> By 1995, the IRGC’s ranks in Sudan had swelled from several hundred to several thousand terrorists. Roughly a third of them were the ambassador’s colleagues from Hezbollah.<sup>17</sup>

In short order, these Hezbollah and IRGC terrorists began working with al-Qaeda and its Sunni allies. They made toppling the Egyptian regime of Hosni Mubarak a top priority. In the early 1980s, radicals associated with the two leading Egyptian terrorist groups, the Islamic Group and Egyptian Islamic Jihad, attempted to overthrow Egypt’s ruling secular government. But after the assassination of President Sadat in 1981, hundreds of radicals were jailed and a decade of relative quiet ensued. In the early 1990s, with help from Iran, Sudan, and bin Laden, the two terrorist organizations suddenly made a comeback.<sup>18</sup> Dozens of terrorist attacks once again rocked Egyptian society.

In April 1993, President Mubarak warned then-CIA director James Woolsey about Iran’s hand in the surge in Egyptian terrorism. Mubarak reportedly told Woolsey that Iran was directly involved in fomenting the violence.<sup>19</sup> Iran, Mubarak said, was using Sudanese soil to train the terrorists. Egypt also accused Iran of illegally shipping weapons across Egypt’s southern border with Sudan. That same year, Egypt cut off all diplomatic relations with Iran in protest. Throughout the 1990s, Egypt repeatedly accused Iran, Sudan, and bin Laden of jointly sponsoring the IG and the EIJ.<sup>20</sup>

Several important points should be noted here. First, both the IG and the EIJ are among bin Laden's strongest allies and al-Qaeda's most vital affiliates. Both were signatories to bin Laden's February 1998 manifesto calling for jihad against the West. And no one today would seriously question Ayman al-Zawahiri's (the EIJ's leader) role as al-Qaeda's second highest ranking terrorist. That Iran was working directly with both groups in the early 1990s—a time when bin Laden's new terrorist venture was first being formulated—should give anyone wishing to dismiss the possibility of collusion between Iran and al-Qaeda pause. After all, if Iran was willing to work with these al-Qaeda allies against one common enemy, Egypt, then why would Tehran refrain from working together against the country Iran considers its greatest enemy?

Second, the Iran-Sudan-al-Qaeda axis armed not only Egyptian terrorists, but also Sunni terrorists throughout the Middle East and Africa. Of particular note is their support for Algerian Islamists who were involved in an especially bloody civil war during the 1990s. The Algerian government, similar to Mubarak's Egypt, repeatedly accused Iran and Sudan of arming Islamic radicals bent on acquiring power.<sup>21</sup> And, similar to their Egyptian counterparts, Algerian radicals went to Sudan to receive training in Iran's terrorist camps. Bin Laden also took an interest in Algeria's Islamists by establishing an al-Qaeda cadre there.

Third, and most important, Sudan provided fertile ground for terrorist cross-breeding. The thousands of Hezbollah terrorists who relocated to Africa's largest nation (by area) worked closely not only with al-Qaeda's affiliates but with bin Laden's inner-circle as well. By the early 1990s, thanks to al-Turabi, al-Qaeda, Iran, and Hezbollah had entered into a terrorist "joint venture." As the Clinton Administration charged in the first federal indictment of bin Laden and al-Qaeda:

Al Qaeda...forged alliances with the National Islamic Front in the Sudan and with the government of Iran and its associated terrorist group Hezbollah for the purpose

of working together against their perceived common enemies in the West, particularly the United States.<sup>22</sup>

At the heart of this alliance lies the relationship between bin Laden and the man who can rightly be regarded as the pioneer of Islamist terrorism: Imad Mugnyah.

## 4. A MATCH MADE IN HELL

*Hezbollah may be the “A-Team of Terrorists” and maybe al-Qaeda is actually the “B” team.*

—Former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage

Of all the terrorists who visited bin Laden in Hassan al-Turabi’s Sudan, one stands out above all others: Imad Mugniyah. Years before Osama bin Laden became a household name, Mugniyah was the world’s most lethal terrorist.

As a young man in the mid 1970s, Mugniyah joined Yasser Arafat’s Force 17, a terrorist organization then dedicated to protecting the PLO’s chairman and to assassinating senior Israeli politicians. Mugniyah’s ruthless skill quickly gained him notoriety, and in short order he was coordinating terrorist operations with Arafat’s new ally: the mullahs of Iran. Shortly after Iran established Hezbollah as its Lebanese-based terrorist proxy in the early 1980s, Mugniyah became the chief of its international terrorist operations. Prior to 9/11 he would kill more Americans than perhaps any other terrorist.

America was introduced to Mugniyah's terror on April 18, 1983, when a van packed with explosives bombed the United States Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon. It was the first Islamist suicide attack against an American target. Months later, on October 23, 1983, Mugniyah's operatives simultaneously detonated truck bombs against a residence for French paratroopers and the U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon. It was the first coordinated, simultaneous Islamist terrorist attack against multiple targets. Combined, the two attacks killed more than 300 Americans.

Several months later, Mugniyah would add to his resume the kidnapping, torture, and murder of William Buckley, the CIA's station chief in Beirut. In June 1985, Mugniyah's operatives hijacked TWA Flight 847. When the hijackers' demand for the release of more than a dozen Iranian-backed terrorists was not met, Mugniyah's goons beat and shot U.S. Navy Serviceman Robert Stethem, a passenger on the flight. To recount the details of Mugniyah's career fully would take volumes. No nation has been able to stop his string of hijackings, kidnappings, bombings, and assassinations against Western and Israeli citizens. His operations continue to this day.

America has never known quite what to do about Mugniyah. On at least a few occasions authorities have reportedly tried to capture him, but those efforts were half-hearted at best. It was only after the September 11 terrorist attacks that Mugniyah was added to the FBI's list of most wanted terrorists. But the \$5 million reward for his capture is certainly not commensurate with the turmoil and death he has caused. America's European allies have shown even less resolve in dealing with Mugniyah. In 2005, for example, Germany released from jail one of his accomplices in the TWA hijacking.

Mugniyah's hand in al-Qaeda's rise is rarely mentioned. Bin Laden's al-Qaeda was built to wage a guerilla campaign against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Initially, the organization lacked the type of terrorist know-how that would make its attacks against Western societies lethal. Mugniyah changed that. The best evidence of Mugniyah's role in al-Qaeda's evolution comes from two al-Qaeda

operatives who testified during the trial of the terrorists responsible for the August 7, 1998, embassy bombings: Ali Mohamed and Jamal al-Fadl.

Ali Mohamed was one of Ayman al-Zawahiri's most trusted agents. In the late 1980s, al-Zawahiri tasked Mohamed with infiltrating American society. Mohamed succeeded. He became a supply sergeant in the U.S. Army's elite Green Berets, while at the same time he hosted television shows that explained his version of Islam to fellow servicemen. Amazingly, Mohamed bounced back and forth between his duties in the Army and running sensitive missions for al-Qaeda, including the training of bin Laden's personal security detail and scoping targets for future terrorist attacks.<sup>1</sup>

During the embassy bombings trial, Mohamed admitted to conspiring with al-Qaeda in the attacks, and in other terrorist activities. He also provided startling details on the collaboration between Hezbollah and al-Qaeda:

I was aware of certain contacts between al Qaeda and [Egyptian Islamic] al Jihad organization, on one side, and Iran and Hezbollah on the other side. I arranged security for a meeting in the Sudan between Mugnyiah, Hezbollah's chief, and bin Laden.

Hezbollah provided explosives training for al-Qaeda and al Jihad. Iran supplied Egyptian Jihad with weapons. Iran also used Hezbollah to supply explosives that were disguised to look like rocks.

According to Mohamed, al-Qaeda self-consciously modeled itself after Hezbollah: Mugnyiah's group successfully drove the U.S. out of Lebanon in 1984 with a series of attacks, and al-Qaeda sought to force the same type of retreat from the Middle East.

Mohamed elaborated:

I was involved in the [Egyptian] Islamic Jihad organization, and the Islamic Jihad organization has a very close

link to al-Qaeda, the organization, for bin Laden. And the objective of all this, just to attack any Western target in the Middle East, to force the government of the Western countries just to pull out from the Middle East. . . .

Based on the Marine explosion in Beirut in 1984 [*sic*: 1983] and the American pull-out from Beirut, they will be the same method, to force the United States to pull out from Saudi Arabia.

Jamal al-Fadl had been a trusted confidant of bin Laden before stealing money from al-Qaeda's coffers. In his testimony, Al-Fadl described a meeting between a Sudanese scholar named Ahmed Abdel Rahman Hamadabi, an Iranian Sheikh named Nomani (who was an emissary of the mullahs), and senior leaders of al-Qaeda:

Q: What happened when Sheikh Nomani came to the guesthouse in Riyadh City?

A: In front there they sit down and some of the higher membership, they got meeting and talking with the Sheikh Nomani and Hamadabi.

Q: Was Bin Laden there?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell us what was discussed at that meeting?

A: *They [Nomani and Hamadabi] talk about we have to come together and we have to forget the problem between each other and each one he should respect the other because our enemy is one and because there is no reason to fight each other.*

Q: Who did they describe the enemy as being?

A: *They say westerns. [sic] (Emphasis added)*

Terrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna explains that the meeting

mentioned by al-Fadl was “chaired by Osama” and “was the first in a series between Al Qaeda and Iran on the one hand and Al Qaeda and Hezbollah on the other.” The meetings were not low-level affairs. Sheikh Nomani had an office in Khartoum as a representative of the Iranian government. Nomani had “access to the highest echelons of power in Tehran.”<sup>2</sup>

According to Gunaratna, al-Qaeda had practical objectives for the meetings. Bin Laden wanted his organization to learn how to make large explosive devices capable of bringing down large buildings. According to the 9/11 Commission, the discussions in Sudan “led to an informal agreement to cooperate in providing support—even if only training—for actions carried out primarily against Israel and the United States.”<sup>3</sup> As a result, “senior al Qaeda operatives and trainers traveled to Iran to receive training in explosives.”<sup>4</sup> Another delegation traveled “to the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon for further training in explosives as well as intelligence and security” in the fall of 1993.<sup>5</sup> Several of the al-Qaeda terrorists who received this training would go on to become bin Laden’s most trusted leaders.

Mughniyah did more for al-Qaeda than just train them to make bombs. Gunaratna explains the wide-ranging impact of Mughniyah on bin Laden’s al-Qaeda network in his seminal book, *Inside Al Qaeda*:

It was Mughniyah who inspired Osama to develop coordinated, simultaneous attacks as a regular modus operandi, and this has been the hallmark of most subsequent Al Qaeda operations, including 9/11 and the East Africa bombings....

Mughniyah, who was especially close to the Iranians, helped Al Qaeda to develop its agent-handling systems, having specialized in conducting long-range operations—including the suicide bombing of the Jewish community center and the Israeli consulate in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994 respectively. Both Hezbollah trainers and experts from Iran’s Ministry of Information and Security



trained Al Qaeda fighters in Sudan (in existing Al Qaeda facilities), Lebanon (in Hezbollah camps) and Iran (in officially run bases). Thereafter Al Qaeda's modus operandi came to resemble closely that of Hezbollah.

It would not take long for al-Qaeda to put this expertise to use. On November 13, 1995, two explosions, roughly five minutes apart, rocked a Saudi National Guard training facility in Riyadh. The facility was one of several at which Americans trained their Saudi counterparts to defend their country against potential Iraqi attacks. The explosions killed five Americans—including one U.S. soldier and four civilians—and wounded dozens of others. The attack was among al-Qaeda's earliest inside the Saudi Kingdom and it shocked the Saudi royal family. Just a few months earlier, bin Laden had openly threatened King Fahd with terrorist attacks inside his Kingdom. Now the Saudis knew he was not only serious, but that he had the capability.

Less than one week later, on November 19, 1995, an al-Qaeda bomb struck the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan. Al-Qaeda had now demonstrated the ability to hit hard targets separated by thousands of miles within days of each other.

There is evidence that Mugnyah played a direct role in the attack on the Egyptian Embassy. According to the CIA's Bob Baer, shortly after the attack American intelligence learned that "Mugnyah's deputy had provided a stolen Lebanese passport to one of the planners of the bombing." Al-Qaeda and Mugnyah stayed in contact afterwards as well. "Six months later," Baer explains, "we found out that one of bin Laden's most dangerous associates was calling one of Mugnyah's offices in Beirut."<sup>6</sup>

Nor was that the end of the contact between al-Qaeda and Mugnyah. From June 21-23, 1996, Iran hosted a terrorist summit very similar to those hosted by Turabi in Khartoum. Among the attendees were representatives of the major Palestinian terrorist groups as well as a leading Kurdish terrorist group. But the three most conspicuous terrorists in attendance were Mugnyah, a representative of bin

Laden named Muhammad Ali Ahmad, and Ahmad Salah of Ayman al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad.<sup>7</sup> The three terrorists agreed to work together under Iran's direction to attack American interests.

In *Why America Slept*, investigative journalist Gerald Posner offers details about the conference and the pact to confront America. "During the conference, it was announced that there would be increased attacks against U.S. interests, especially in the Persian Gulf region. And to oversee those attacks, the conference established a Committee of Three, under the chairmanship of Iranian external intelligence chief Mahdi Chamran." Posner interviewed a CIA counterintelligence officer who told him that Langley did not infiltrate the conference but did obtain "summary reports after paying someone who had been there." However, the reports did not arrive at the CIA's field station in Asia until weeks after the conference.<sup>8</sup>

By then it was too late.



## 5. KHOBAR TOWERS: A JOINT OPERATION?

*My Muslim Brothers of The World: Your brothers in Palestine and in the land of the two Holy Places are calling upon your help and asking you to take part in fighting against the enemy—your enemy and their enemy—the Americans and the Israelis. They are asking you to do whatever you can, with one's own means and ability, to expel the enemy, humiliated and defeated, out of the sanctities of Islam.*

—Osama bin Laden, in his infamous fatwa, “Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places,” August 1996<sup>1</sup>

On June 25, 1996—two days after Iran’s terrorist summit ended—a team of Mugnyiah’s Hezbollah terrorists detonated a truck bomb inside the Khobar Towers housing complex in Saudi Arabia. The Americans living at Khobar were responsible for maintaining

the no-fly zones over Iraq. Nineteen U.S. servicemen were killed in the attack and hundreds of others were wounded.

Amazingly, the CIA had known months beforehand that Iran was casing U.S. facilities around the globe. A January 1, 1996 CIA report noted that “numerous incidents of probable Iranian-sponsored surveillance of U.S. persons and facilities overseas were reported during 1995.”<sup>2</sup> The CIA nonetheless downplayed the evidence of Iran’s malfeasance. Although the information collected “could facilitate future planning of terrorist operations,” the CIA concluded, the surveillance by Iran’s agents “probably was a matter of intimidation rather than planning for terrorist attacks.” The CIA explained:

The obvious nature of the surveillance—especially the use of Iranian diplomatic vehicles—suggests that the United States is intended to see it. Tehran may be trying to signal its displeasure with Washington’s policy on Iran and to demonstrate Iran’s reach. The blatant techniques...are not characteristic of the careful methods Iran has generally used when planning actual operations.

It is not clear if the CIA knew that the Iranians were casing targets in Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, after the Khobar Towers attack, it was certainly clear that they were “planning actual operations” and not just trying to signal their “displeasure” with the U.S. But not only did America’s intelligence agencies fail to stop the bombing, President Clinton’s administration also failed to hold Iran accountable after the fact.

The initial investigation into the bombing was stymied by the Saudis who feared that an American reprisal against Iran might further destabilize their kingdom. The Clinton Administration, for its part, was more interested in feckless diplomacy with Iran than in bringing justice to the murdered Americans.<sup>3</sup> Somewhat naively, President Clinton even sent a letter to Iranian president Mohammad Khatami asking for help in the probe three years after the

attack.<sup>4</sup>

Not until June 2001 were the perpetrators of the attack finally indicted and Iran's hand officially acknowledged by the U.S. Government. The Khobar Towers indictment cites numerous connections between the attackers, the Saudi branch of Mugniyah's Hezbollah, and the Iranian government. Two of the attackers, for example, received military training from the Iranian government in southern Iran and others were trained in Iranian Revolutionary Guard camps in the early 1990s. Prior to the strike, another terrorist received a phone call from an Iranian government official asking how the surveillance was progressing.<sup>5</sup> Two officers in Iran's Ministry of Intelligence (MOIS) were named as unindicted co-conspirators.<sup>6</sup> In 1994, the IRGC's Qods Force directed the cell to begin surveillance of American targets and in 1995 they began to reconnoiter the Khobar Towers.<sup>7</sup>

But there is more to the story. Although no one seriously disputes that the attack was orchestrated by the Iranians, there is also evidence that al-Qaeda may have played a role.

Certainly, the attack fit both groups' goals and *modi operandi*. As noted above, according to Bob Baer, Hezbollah had assisted al-Qaeda's plot to destroy the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad months earlier. The attack on Khobar was another type of operation that Iran, Hezbollah, and al-Qaeda had a common interest in executing. They all hoped to drive America out of the Middle East, just as Hezbollah and Iran had driven America out of Lebanon in 1984. Indeed, Mugniyah, bin Laden, and a representative of Ayman al-Zawahiri reportedly renewed their commitment to work together on this objective just days before the attack on Khobar.

Moreover, during the summer of 1996 bin Laden became increasingly vocal in his opposition to the Saudi royal family and its relationship with America. That year, after the bombing, he issued his first declaration of war on America. "What happened in Riyadh and [at Khobar] when 24 Americans were killed in two bombings is clear evidence of the huge anger of Saudi people against America. The Saudis now know their real enemy is America."<sup>8</sup>

The State Department took notice of bin Laden's increasingly hostile rhetoric. A July 18, 1996, report by Foggy Bottom's analysts characterized "recent press interviews" with bin Laden as revealing "an increasingly confident militant leader." Bin Laden's "willingness to speak more openly to the press about his militant opposition to the Saudi regime and the West," State's analysts wrote, "suggest more a man emboldened by recent events, whether or not he was involved in them." Furthermore, Bin Laden's rhetoric raised the possibility that "he may have played a role in the June Khobar Towers bombing."<sup>9</sup>

The State Department was not alone in surmising that bin Laden and his network might have played a role in the Khobar Towers attack. Within weeks of the bombing, the CIA produced a report titled, "Khobar Bombing: Saudi Shia, Iran, and Usama Bin Ladin All Suspects."<sup>10</sup> However, uncertainty lingered for years. By 1999, the Clinton Administration had accumulated rock solid evidence of Iran's hand in the attack, but refused to hold Iran accountable.<sup>11</sup> Bin Laden's role was left an open question.

An investigation into bin Laden's ties to the Khobar Towers attack was left to the 9/11 Commission, which reported some new evidence while refraining from drawing any firm conclusions. "While the evidence of Iranian involvement is strong," the 9/11 Commission's report reads, "there are also signs that al-Qaeda played some role, as yet unknown."<sup>12</sup> The Commission's Staff Statement No. 15 provided more details. In addition to the strong evidence of Iran's role:

Intelligence obtained shortly after the bombing, however, also supported suspicions of Bin Laden's involvement. There were reports in the months preceding the attack that Bin Laden was seeking to facilitate a shipment of explosives, to Saudi Arabia. On the day of the attack, Bin Laden was congratulated by other members of [al-Qaeda].

Among the al-Qaeda operatives offering bin Laden congratulations was the man who would become his number two, Ayman al-Zawahiri.<sup>13</sup>

A little more than one week after the September 11 attacks, another connection between al-Qaeda and the Khobar Towers bombing was reported in *The New York Times*. Anonymous “American officials” told the *Times* that one of the terrorists responsible for financing the 9/11 hijackers, Mamoun Darkazanli, “took part in a 1996 attack on government troops in Saudi Arabia.”<sup>14</sup> The only such attack in 1996 was the one on Khobar.<sup>15</sup>

Whether or not al-Qaeda played any specific role in the Khobar Towers bombing, Iran continued to work with al-Qaeda throughout the 1990s. Even after bin Laden relocated to Afghanistan, for example, al-Qaeda remained in frequent contact with Iranian officials. As the 9/11 Commission reported: “Intelligence indicates the persistence of contacts between Iranian security officials and senior al Qaeda figures after Bin Laden’s return to Afghanistan.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, from the middle of 1996 until 1998, 10% of bin Laden’s satellite phone calls went to Iran.<sup>17</sup> In addition to these electronic communications, bin Laden also continued using his personal emissaries to explore collaboration with Iran on future attacks. A little more than one month after the Khobar Towers attack, one of bin Laden’s close confidants was already setting up future meetings with the Iranians.<sup>18</sup>

And more than two years after the Khobar Towers attack, Iran played an unambiguous role in al-Qaeda’s most successful attack prior to 9/11: the August 7, 1998, embassy bombings.





## 6. MUGNIYAH'S FINGERPRINTS: THE 1998 EMBASSY BOMBINGS

*When you start fortifying your embassies it becomes very attractive—the Americans have made themselves very attractive targets. Probably [bin Laden] would try to mobilize friends—ex-Afghan fighters from Arab countries—and try to hit back against the Americans, anywhere.*

—Hassan al-Turabi, following the August 7, 1998 embassy bombings<sup>1</sup>

On the morning of August 7, 1998, twin truck bombs simultaneously exploded in Kenya and Tanzania, hundreds of miles apart. More than 250 people were killed and thousands more were injured. It was al-Qaeda's most successful operation prior to September 11.

Images of the carnage in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam sent shockwaves around the world. Bin Laden's minions had executed or attempted scores of attacks before, but nothing nearly on the scale

of the embassy bombings. For the first time, al-Qaeda displayed an alarmingly advanced capability. Indeed, as the 9/11 Commission would explain years later:

The period after the August 1998 embassy bombings was critical in shaping U.S. policy toward Bin Laden. Although more Americans had been killed in the 1996 Khobar Towers attack, and many more in Beirut in 1983, the overall loss of life rivaled the worst attacks in memory. More ominous, perhaps, was the demonstration of an operational capability to coordinate two nearly simultaneous attacks on U.S. embassies in different countries.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Qaeda acquired this “operational capability,” in large part, with assistance from Iran and Hezbollah.

It does not require an active imagination to see the parallels between the August 1998 embassy bombings and Hezbollah’s attacks on the U.S. Embassy and other targets in the early 1980s. The weapon of choice (suicide truck bombs), method of execution (simultaneous attacks), and choice of targets (American diplomatic facilities) all exactly match Hezbollah’s and Mugniyah’s *modus operandi*. As discussed above, bin Laden had asked Hezbollah for its assistance in developing these same capabilities for al-Qaeda, and Hezbollah obliged—a fact cited in the Clinton Administration’s indictment of the al-Qaeda terrorists responsible for the embassy bombings.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Qaeda is nothing if not patient. Some of its most spectacular attacks were preceded by years of meticulous preparation. Indeed, the legwork for the embassy bombings began as early as December 1993.<sup>4</sup> Al-Qaeda’s prep team was led by Ali Mohamed, the same man who had handled security for the meeting between Mugniyah and bin Laden in the early 1990s. In January 1994, Bin Laden received his first “surveillance reports, complete with diagrams prepared by the team’s computer specialist.”<sup>5</sup> The 9/11 Commission

further explained:

Al Qaeda had begun developing the tactical expertise for such attacks months earlier, when some of its operatives—top military committee members and several operatives who were involved with the Kenya cell among them—were sent to Hezbollah training camps in Lebanon.<sup>6</sup>

That is, Mugniyah's Hezbollah trained the al-Qaeda cell in Kenya responsible for destroying the American embassy there. The Commission drew this conclusion largely from the testimony of the U.S. government's two star witnesses at the embassy bombings trial.

In particular, Jamal al-Fadl told prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald that he personally knew of several al-Qaeda associates who were trained by Mugniyah's Hezbollah. One exchange in his testimony is especially noteworthy:

Q: Did you ever speak to anyone who received any training from anyone who was a Shia Muslim?

A: Yes.

Q: Who did you speak to?

A: Abu Talha al Sudani and Saif al Islam el Masry. . . .

Q: What did Saif al Islam El Masry tell you?

A: He say they go to south Lebanon to got training with the Shiites over there.

Q: Did he indicate what Shia group in south Lebanon provided the training?

A: *I remember he told me it's called Hezbollah.*

Q: What did Abu Talha tell you?

A: Abu Talha, he tell me the training is very good, and he bring some tapes with him.

Q: Did Abu Talha tell you what was on the tapes he

brought back?

*A: I saw one of the tapes, and he tell me they train about how to explosives [sic] big buildings. (Emphasis added.)*

“Big buildings” like the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

The terrorists named by al-Fadl were not low-level flunkies. Nearly all of them went on to prominent positions within al-Qaeda. Saif al-Islam el Masry, for example, was a member of al-Qaeda’s majlis al-shura, or consultation council. Abu Talha al-Sudani is accused of acting as the financier for the embassy bombings. And later on in his testimony, al-Fadl named another al-Qaeda terrorist who received Hezbollah’s training and who would become especially notorious: Muhamad Ibrahim Makkawi, otherwise known as Saif al-Adel.

Al-Adel has been tied to a litany of al-Qaeda’s attacks, including the embassy bombings and 9/11.<sup>7</sup> Al-Adel’s diary was captured in a raid in Saudi Arabia after 9/11 and it reveals that he had an intimate knowledge of the 9/11 plot.<sup>8</sup> Shortly after 9/11, al-Adel rose to the rank of al-Qaeda’s military chief—a position thought to be third in al-Qaeda’s hierarchy, behind only Ayman al-Zawahiri and bin Laden himself.<sup>9</sup> When American-led forces invaded Afghanistan in 2001, al-Adel fled to Iran. He is protected by the Iranian regime to this day. (Al-Adel’s safe haven in Iran is discussed further below.)

Terrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna has provided additional detail connecting Iran to al-Qaeda’s embassy bombing teams. “In addition to developing this capability [to attack multiple targets simultaneously] with Iranian assistance,” Gunaratna explains, “Al Qaeda also received a large amount of explosives from Iran that were used in the bombing of the East African targets.”<sup>10</sup> A U.S. intelligence official has confirmed Gunaratna’s claim. According to this official, the U.S. Intelligence Community obtained reporting that demonstrated Iran did, in fact, supply al-Qaeda with explosives used in the attack.

Thus, we know the following: Hezbollah trained the al-Qaeda terrorists responsible for the embassy bombings and to this day

Iran harbors at least one of the key terrorists involved in the operation. In addition, there is evidence that Iran supplied a “large amount of explosives” used in the attack. Yet, remarkably, most analysts still maintain that Iran and al-Qaeda have had nothing to do with one another.

This conventional wisdom was always based more on Western assumptions than on the actual evidence. For example, after the embassy bombings, the Clinton Administration investigated the ties between al-Qaeda and possible state sponsors. In *The Age of Sacred Terror*, Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon explain that “The question nagged: how could any group execute such a pair of attacks without the help of a state sponsor?”<sup>11</sup> Richard Clarke, the National Security Council’s chief terrorism official, “assigned one of his directors to review every piece of intelligence that hinted at any connection whatsoever” between al-Qaeda and its affiliates and either Iran or Iraq, the two leading state sponsors of terrorism. “When the printer finished spitting out intelligence reports, the stack of paper was three feet high. In its pages there was plenty of smoke but no smoking gun.”

The collected reports demonstrated, for example, that al-Qaeda’s operatives were openly living in Iran. But this was explained away. “Among counterterrorism experts there was a presumption that the authorities in Tehran were surveilling the Sunni radicals,” Benjamin and Simon argue, so that the mullahs could “know what their guests up to” and not because Iran was actively assisting them. In summing up, Benjamin and Simon retreat to an old meme: the “split between Sunni and Shiite runs so deep” that Muslims who believe as bin Laden does regard Shiites as either “heretics or not Muslims at all.”

The evidence strongly indicated that Iran and Hezbollah were playing a leading role in al-Qaeda’s terror. Those who were responsible for defending America against her terrorist enemies simply chose not to see it.



## 7. SEE NO EVIL: IRAN AND 9/11

*Did Osama bin Laden act alone, through his own Al Qaeda network, in launching the [September 11] attacks? About that I am far more certain and emphatic: no.*

—Bob Baer, a former CIA field operative, describing Hezbollah's assistance of al-Qaeda in his 2002 book *See No Evil* <sup>1</sup>

*Later in our inquiry, we received a report that Iran may have facilitated the passage of some of the 9/11 hijackers, for instance by not stamping their passports; we did not find that Iran had foreknowledge of or participated in the 9/11 conspiracy.*

—9/11 Commissioners Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, writing in their 2006 book *Without Precedent: The Inside Story of the 9/11 Commission* <sup>2</sup>



By all accounts, Bob Baer has led a remarkable life. For decades, he was one of America's few successful intelligence operatives in the Middle East. As a case officer in the CIA's Directorate of Operations in the Middle East, his work took to him to such terrorist havens as Hassan al-Turabi's Sudan, Iranian strongholds in Lebanon, and also northern Iraq. Baer retired from the CIA in 1997 and in 1998 he received Langley's Career Intelligence Medal with a citation noting: "He repeatedly put himself in personal danger, working the hardest targets, in service to his country."<sup>3</sup>

In 2002, Baer published a scathing attack, aptly titled *See No Evil*, on the intelligence bureaucracy he had once served. Motivated by the September 11 attacks, Baer offered his unique insight into how an agency built to prevent surprise attacks like Pearl Harbor had failed so miserably. The attitude of senior officials didn't help. Baer recounts how he learned secondhand that one of the agency's highest ranking officers believed that "when the dust finally clears, Americans will see that September 11 was a triumph for the intelligence community, not a failure." To which Baer responded: "If that's going to be the official line of thinking at the agency charged with manning the front lines in the war against the Osama bin Ladens of this world, then I am more than angry: I'm scared to death of what lies ahead."<sup>4</sup>

Baer's most startling argument in *See No Evil* is that Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda did not act alone on September 11, 2001. He argues that Imad Mugnyiah's Hezbollah and its Iranian sponsor also played a role.<sup>5</sup> Baer does not offer any specific evidence of Iranian involvement in the September 11 attacks, but the investigation was just beginning when *See No Evil* was published. Nevertheless, the author's deduction was an informed one.

Baer tracked Mugnyiah on and off since the 1980s. He had good contacts in Hezbollah's Lebanese base, so much so that he even set up shop in Beirut after retiring from the CIA. For years, he patiently collected evidence on the bombings of the U.S. Embassy and the Marine barracks in 1983. The CIA would have likely failed to piece together the precise details of those plots without Baer's dogged ef-

forts. Responsibility for the 1983 bombings was initially claimed by an enigmatic group calling itself the Islamic Jihad Organization. It took years for Baer to determine that the group was really a front for Iran's Hezbollah. Baer eventually amassed overwhelming evidence that the bombings were Mugnyiah's handiwork. Thanks to Baer's work, as well as other evidence collected, Mugnyiah's role in those bombings is not seriously disputed in the counterterrorism community today.

This same determination later led Baer to pursue the possibility that Mugnyiah and Iran had a role in bin Laden's terror. As discussed above, Baer learned that one of Mugnyiah's deputies had provided a stolen Lebanese passport to an al-Qaeda agent responsible for the November 1995 bombing of the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad. Months later, Baer also found "that one of bin Laden's most dangerous associates was calling one of Mugnyiah's offices in Beirut."<sup>6</sup>

"Even before I left the CIA in late 1997," Baer writes, "we had learned that bin Laden had suggested to the Iranians that they drop their efforts to undermine central Asian governments and instead join him in a campaign against the United States."<sup>7</sup> He learned, too, that "in July 1996 bin Laden's allies, the Egyptian Gama'at [the Islamic Group], had been in touch with" Mugnyiah. Elsewhere, Baer has reported that there is "incontrovertible evidence" of a meeting between bin Laden and a representative of the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) in 1996.<sup>8</sup>

Based on these threads of evidence, and his decades-long experience tracking Iran's master terrorist, Baer concluded that Mugnyiah and Iran must have played a role in the September 11 attacks. Although he does not say so in *See No Evil*, Baer may have been struck by the manner in which the strikes were carried out. All the hallmarks of Mugnyiah's terror were present. Decades earlier, Mugnyiah had perfected the use of suicide bombers in the first such attacks against Americans. Iran's master terrorist also habitually hijacked Western aircraft for two decades.

Indeed, Baer's instincts were uncanny. More than two years after

*See No Evil* was published, the 9/11 Commission uncovered evidence implicating Mugnyiah and Iran. Yet, incredibly, Iran's master terrorist is not even named in the Commission's final report.

Just one week before the 9/11 Commission wrapped up its work, the Commission's staff uncovered evidence which had previously escaped its attention.<sup>9</sup> Throughout much of the Commission's investigation, CIA analysts maintained that there was no substantive relationship between the Shiite regime in Iran and bin Laden's Sunni al-Qaeda. The evidence, however, demonstrated that for the better part of a decade the CIA had been collecting reports of collaboration between the two sides. One analytic summary of these reports, entitled "Old School Ties," discussed al-Qaeda's links to Iran during bin Laden's time in al-Turabi's Sudan.<sup>10</sup>

The last minute discovery of the evidence tying Iran to al-Qaeda prevented the Commission from fully investigating the leads or giving them proper prominence within the report. Nonetheless, some startling findings were included. Evidence demonstrated that "8 to 10 of the 14 Saudi 'muscle' operatives traveled into or out of Iran between October 2000 and February 2001."<sup>11</sup> Not only did these hijackers use Iran as a transit hub, Hezbollah officials actively assisted their movements. The Commission reports that a "senior Hezbollah official" traveled to Saudi Arabia in October 2000 "to coordinate activities there." That same official "planned to assist individuals in Saudi Arabia in traveling to Iran during November." Indeed, Ahmed al-Ghamdi, one of al-Qaeda's hijackers aboard United Airlines Flight 175, and the Hezbollah terrorist shared a flight from Saudi Arabia to Beirut in November. Although the 9/11 Commission fails to name him, various sources have confirmed that the "senior Hezbollah official" was, in fact, Mugnyiah.<sup>12</sup>

The omission of this name in the Commission's report seems inexplicable, last minute discovery or no. Mugnyiah is perhaps the world's most accomplished terrorist, whose list of American victims is second only to bin Laden's. Moreover, if Mugnyiah was involved in 9/11, then—quite obviously—so were his Iranian masters. Either way, it is highly likely that Hezbollah's senior leaders were at

least aware of the travels of several of the hijackers. The 9/11 Commission noted: “Hezbollah officials in Beirut and Iran were expecting the arrival of a group during [October and November of 2000]. The travel of this group was important enough to merit the attention of senior figures in Hezbollah.”

There is more. The Commission found a flurry of evidence indicating that Hezbollah had coordinated the travels of at least several other 9/11 hijackers. Some of them, like al-Ghamdi, traveled to Iran through Hezbollah’s home turf—Lebanon. In November of 2000, Salem al-Hazmi, who was part of the American Airlines Flight 77 hijack team, traveled to Beirut. That same month, three other hijackers—Wail al-Shehri, Waleed al-Shehri, and Ahmed al-Nami—all traveled from Saudi Arabia to Beirut and then on to Iran. One of Mugnyyah’s associates even accompanied them on the Beirut-to-Iran leg of their trip. Other flights taken by the hijackers originated in Iran or ended there. Two of the hijackers flew from Iran to Kuwait in November and two others, Satam al-Suqami and Majed Moqed, flew to Iran from Bahrain. Al-Qaeda hijacker Kahlid al-Mihdar—who the CIA had witnessed at an al-Qaeda planning session in January of 2000—“may have taken a flight from Syria to Iran, and then traveled further in Iran to a point near the Afghan border” in February 2001.

Since the 9/11 Commission could not interview the hijackers themselves about their travels, the commissioners wanted to question the ringleaders in American custody. But the CIA refused to allow commissioners or staff to interview any of the al-Qaeda agents in CIA custody. Instead, as Edward Jay Epstein first pointed out, the commissioners referred this “deeply troubling” matter back to a CIA project manager, who returned an answer “just in time” to be included in the 9/11 Commission’s final report.<sup>13</sup> The CIA tried to assuage any concerns over Iranian involvement by relying on al-Qaeda’s supposed denials. Both Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), the plot’s mastermind, and Ramzi Binalshibh, al-Qaeda’s point man for the 9/11 plot, confirmed “that several of the 9/11 hijackers...transited Iran on their way to or from Afghanistan, tak-

ing advantage of the Iranian practice of not stamping Saudi passports.” But “they deny any other reason for the hijackers’ travel to Iran.” In addition, “They also deny any relationship between the hijackers and Hezbollah.”<sup>14</sup> The commissioners were, for the most part, satisfied, concluding that they “found no evidence that Iran or Hezbollah was aware of the planning for what later became the 9/11 attack.” But they left the topic at least nominally open: “We believe this topic requires further investigation by the U.S. government.”<sup>15</sup>

Yet there is already enough evidence to suggest that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed’s and Ramzi Binalshibh’s denials are not credible. Binalshibh, in particular, has ties to Iran that the Commission did not explore.

A native of Yemen, Binalshibh first applied for a U.S. visa in 1995.<sup>16</sup> His application was denied so he relocated to Germany, where he sought asylum claiming that he was a refugee from Turabi’s Sudan. His asylum request was denied, but he eventually was granted a German visa. While living in Hamburg, Binalshibh joined one of al-Qaeda’s two main European cells responsible for the September 11 attacks. In an interview that was broadcast on al-Jazeera in 2002, Binalshibh claimed that he and other members of his Hamburg cell first traveled to Afghanistan for training in 1999. During his training in Afghanistan, Binalshibh and his fellow terrorists pledged *bayat*, or an oath of loyalty, to bin Laden.<sup>17</sup> U.S. intelligence also believes that it was during this trip that the September 11 plan was first mentioned to the Hamburg plotters. Binalshibh and his cell then returned to Germany and began making their preparations to infiltrate America. Binalshibh never was granted an American visa, so he could not take part in the actual hijackings. But he still played an instrumental role in coordinating the attacks, acting as an intermediary between al-Qaeda’s senior leadership, including the September 11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, and the hijackers. On numerous occasions he wired cash to the future hijackers. And in July 2001 he met Mohammed Atta (and possibly some others<sup>18</sup>) in Spain to finalize the details of

the plot.

These facts are well established and not disputed. Binalshibh's travels to Iran, on the other hand, have received scant attention. In December 2000, as reported by *Newsweek*, Binalshibh applied for a four-week visa at the Iranian Embassy in Berlin. On his handwritten application, Binalshibh checked a box indicating that the purpose of his visit was for tourism or "pilgrimage" to one of Iran's holy sites. One question on the application asked, "If you are passing through Iran in transit have you obtained entry visa for your next country of stay?" Binalshibh replied that he had not.<sup>19</sup>

The Iranians granted Binalshibh's visa request. On January 31, 2001 he landed at Tehran International Airport. The German investigators who uncovered Binalshibh's trip know little about his time in Iran; why he went, who he met with, and whether or not he went on to Afghanistan to meet al-Qaeda's senior leadership all remain a mystery. Binalshibh did not return to Germany until nearly one month later, on February 28, 2001.

Six days before the 9/11 attacks Binalshibh returned to Tehran.<sup>20</sup> This preemptive flight from Hamburg is consistent with al-Qaeda's standard operating procedures. An al-Qaeda cell's point man is trained to flee his temporary host country immediately prior to a particularly important attack. By thus disappearing, the operative hopes to avoid a speedy arrest and to make the post-attack investigation more difficult. The tactic frequently works. Indeed, Binalshibh—who would most likely have been scooped up quickly by German authorities had he remained in the country—was not arrested until one year later on September 11, 2002.

More information on Binalshibh's travels to Iran surfaced during the trials of his Hamburg accomplices. According to John Crewdson of the *Chicago Tribune*, Shadi Abdallah, a former bodyguard for Osama bin Laden, met Binalshibh during his time in Afghanistan. Abdallah "testified in a German court that Binalshibh told him of frequent visits to Iran using a false Iranian passport."<sup>21</sup> The *Tribune* also reported that another Hamburg associate, a Syrian named Mohammed Zammar, who personally recruited several of

the 9/11 plotters, also made repeated visits to Iran.

Thus, several threads of evidence tie Mugnyiah, Hezbollah, and Iran to the 9/11 hijackers. Even the 9/11 commissioners admitted that the hijacker's travels to Iran are "deeply disturbing." This is not to say that the evidence "proves" Iranian involvement in 9/11. But certainly it is enough to warrant the "further investigation" called for by the Commission itself. Yet, more than three years after the 9/11 Commission's report was published, that "further investigation" has yet to begin.

## 8. AL-QAEDA'S GREAT ESCAPE

*We began to converge on Iran one after the other. The fraternal brothers in the peninsula of the Arabs, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates who were outside Afghanistan, had already arrived. They possessed abundant funds. We set up a central leadership and working groups. We began to form some groups of fighters to return to Afghanistan to carry out well-prepared missions there. Meanwhile, we began to examine the situation of the group and the fraternal brothers to pick new places for them.*

—Saif al-Adel, a top-ranked al-Qaeda terrorist who was trained by Hezbollah and currently resides in Iran, discussing al-Qaeda's activities following the American-led invasion of Afghanistan<sup>1</sup>

Today, there is no doubt that Iran harbors some of al-Qaeda's most important operatives. Saif al-Adel, the terrorist thought to be al-Qaeda's military chief, and Saad bin Laden, Osama's heir ap-



parent, are among them. Press reports over the last several years have repeatedly mentioned al-Qaeda's presence on Iranian soil.<sup>2</sup> It is often alleged that the al-Qaeda operatives are under some form of "house arrest." According to this argument, the Islamic republic considers the al-Qaeda terrorists inside Iran to be bargaining chips with the West and specifically the United States.<sup>3</sup>

Such thinking is flawed for a variety of reasons. It ignores the substantial pattern of cooperation discussed above; it ignores evidence that Iran actively facilitated al-Qaeda's and the Taliban's retreat from Afghanistan; and it ignores evidence that Iran is complicit in al-Qaeda's ongoing terror operations.

As American-led forces began the invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, al-Qaeda and the Taliban government, led by Mullah Omar, desperately sought avenues for retreat. Some of al-Qaeda's operatives returned to their home countries throughout the Middle East, where they hoped to avoid detection. Some fled to Pakistan's dense urban areas. The 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, for example, disguised his appearance and settled in Karachi, Pakistan, where he was later arrested. Other al-Qaeda operatives, with their Taliban allies, settled in the mountainous region separating Afghanistan and Pakistan, an area the Pakistani government cannot or will not control, preferring instead to make deals with local chieftains, many of whom are friendly with Taliban and al-Qaeda figures.<sup>4</sup> Still others escaped to Iran with Tehran's help.

Iran and the Taliban had long been at odds; the two regimes even nearly went to war just a few years prior to 9/11. The Taliban executed several Iranian officials in the late 1990s and long oppressed Afghanistan's Shiite population, actions which fueled tensions with Iran. In 2000, Iran even tried to kill Mullah Omar in a palace built for him by bin Laden.<sup>5</sup> This bitter relationship between al-Qaeda's one-time host and Iran has been cited by some intelligence officials as a prime reason bin Laden's terrorists could not possibly cooperate with Iran. But in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, and America's counterattack, Iran and the Taliban managed to overcome their differences and find common cause.

One of the earliest reports of collusion between the Taliban and Iran came on November 3, 2001, in the *London Telegraph*.<sup>6</sup> “There have been two official visits from the Taliban to Teheran in the past three weeks,” the *Telegraph* reported, “and a secret visit by an Iranian delegation to Kabul.” The meetings “were confirmed by a Taliban government minister and a senior Taliban diplomat.” In the second of the Taliban’s two visits, the Afghani delegation met with Iran’s deputy Defense Minister “in the eastern Iranian city of Mashad.”<sup>7</sup>

Three months later, *Time* magazine provided additional details concerning the now not-so-secret pact between the Taliban and Iran.<sup>8</sup> According to a well-placed Afghani source, a high-ranking Iranian official representing Iran’s supreme leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini, was “dispatched to Kabul to offer secret sanctuary to Taliban and al-Qaeda fugitives” in October 2001. The Taliban and al-Qaeda took him up on his offer. “Shortly before Herat’s Taliban garrison fled in November [2001],” *Time* reported, “a convoy of 50 off-road vehicles carrying some 250 senior Taliban and al-Qaeda members allegedly crossed over into Iran, using a smugglers’ route through the hills about 20 miles north of the city.” One of *Time*’s sources—an unnamed “Western diplomat”—told the magazine that some of the al-Qaeda and Taliban fugitives were still (as of February 2002) snaking their way through the mountains of Afghanistan on their way to Iran.

A high-level Taliban detainee at the U.S. government’s facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba confirmed Iran’s sudden about-face in its relations with the Taliban.<sup>9</sup> A transcript of the detainee’s tribunal session was released in early 2006 as part of a Freedom of Information Act request by the *Associated Press*. The detainee is unnamed, but according to the U.S. government, he was “the governor of Herat Province in Afghanistan from 1999 to 2001.” (According to a list of former Taliban officials prepared by the United Nations, the governor of Herat at that time was Maulavi Khair Mohammad Khairkhwah.<sup>10</sup>)

Herat is the westernmost province in Afghanistan and is situated on the Iranian border. Its governor “worked for Mullah Omar” and

“had control over police and military functions in Herat to include the administration of the Taliban’s two largest divisions.” The U.S. government also alleges that this governor at one time served as “the Taliban spokesperson for the BBC and Voice of America,” a charge the detainee did not deny. Nor did he deny a third, more astonishing allegation:

Detainee was present at a clandestine meeting in October 2001 between Taliban and Iranian officials in which Iran pledged to assist the Taliban in their war with the United States.

The detainee claimed that he set up the security for the meeting. He also said that the Taliban was represented by a “committee that came from Kandahar, which was the central government at the time.”

The accounts in the *Telegraph* and *Time*, as well as the Gitmo detainee’s transcript, all confirm an important point. The Iranian regime is willing to work with anyone in its war against America—even a long-time enemy like the Taliban. The evidence also helps explain how some of al-Qaeda’s top operatives ended up in Iran in the first place. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, Iran did not detain the terrorists upon their arrival. Tehran actively facilitated their flight from Afghanistan.

Still more details of al-Qaeda’s flight to Iran surfaced in the pages of the *Washington Post* in 2003.<sup>11</sup> According to U.S. and European intelligence officials, al-Qaeda had a longstanding relationship with the elite Qods Force, one of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps’ five branches. The relationship dated to bin Laden’s time in Sudan, when the IRGC and Qods Force set up camps throughout al-Turabi’s country.<sup>12</sup> In particular, al-Qaeda’s Ayman al-Zawahiri forged a lasting relationship with Ahmad Vahidi, a Qods Force commander. According to a European intelligence official, the two negotiated “a safe harbor for some of al-Qaeda’s leaders who were trapped in the mountains of Tora Bora, Afghanistan, in 2001.”<sup>13</sup>

Once in Iran, senior al-Qaeda leaders continued to operate their business as usual. In fact, U.S. intelligence officials believe that in April 2002 Saad bin Laden ordered one of al-Qaeda's first post-9/11 attacks from Iranian soil.<sup>14</sup> More than a year later, on May 12, 2003, suicide bombers attacked three housing compounds in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia almost simultaneously.<sup>15</sup> Saudi and U.S. authorities quickly determined that the attack was ordered from Iranian soil by Saif al-Adel—one of the al-Qaeda terrorists trained by Mugnyiah in Lebanon and who is still wanted by the U.S. in connection with the August 1998 Embassy bombings. Saad bin Laden had also been in contact with al-Qaeda's cells in Riyadh.<sup>16</sup> In addition, shortly after the bombing, Saudi authorities began searching for an al-Qaeda agent named Turki al-Dandani, who was thought to have played a key role in the plot. But he had already escaped to Iran.<sup>17</sup>

On May 16, 2003, just days after the attack on Riyadh, yet another string of suicide bombings rocked Casablanca, Morocco. In the worst terrorist attack in Moroccan history, one dozen al-Qaeda terrorists attacked two restaurants, a five-star hotel, a Jewish community center, a Jewish cemetery, and other targets. Two more would-be bombers were arrested by Moroccan authorities before they could carry out their attacks. Once again, the trail led back to Iran: intelligence officials linked Saad bin Laden to the Moroccan attackers.<sup>18</sup>

Not only has al-Qaeda's senior leadership continued to coordinate attacks from Iranian soil, they have also continued their attempts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. In his memoir, *At the Center of the Storm*, former Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet reveals that Saif al Adel and al-Qaeda's nuclear chief directed al-Qaeda's strategy for acquiring nuclear weapons from their Iranian safe haven. Tenet writes:

From the end of 2002 to the spring of 2003, we received a stream of reliable reporting that the senior al-Qa'ida leadership in Saudi Arabia was negotiating for the pur-

chase of three Russian nuclear devices. Saudi al-Qa'ida chief Abu Bakr related the offer directly to the al-Qa'ida leadership in Iran, where Sayf al-Adl and Abdel al-Aziz al-Masri (described as al-Qa'ida's 'nuclear chief' by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed) were reportedly being held under a loose form of house arrest by the Iranian regime. The al-Qa'ida leadership had obviously learned much from their ventures into the nuclear market in the early 1990s. Sayf al-Adl told Abu Bakr that no price was too high to pay if they could get their hands on such weapons. However, he cautioned Abu Bakr that al-Qa'ida had been stung by scams in the past and that Pakistani specialists should be brought to Saudi Arabia to inspect the merchandise prior to purchase.<sup>19</sup>

In sum, there is abundant evidence that Tehran continues to allow al-Qaeda to operate freely from her soil. Al-Qaeda's agents are not under any binding form of "house arrest," as is widely assumed. But this shouldn't be surprising. Clinton administration officials such as Richard Clarke have long known that Iran openly welcomes al-Qaeda agents. Writing in *Against All Enemies*, Clarke freely admits: "There is, of course, evidence that Iran provided al-Qaeda safe haven before and after September 11."<sup>20</sup> Moreover:

...al Qaeda regularly used Iranian territory for transit and sanctuary prior to September 11. Al Qaeda's Egyptian branch, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, operated openly in Tehran. It is no coincidence that many of the al Qaeda management team, or Shura Council, moved across the border into Iran after U.S. forces invaded Afghanistan.<sup>21</sup>

Members of al-Qaeda's management team were not the only high-level terrorists who fled to Iran. So did the man who would become notorious for plunging Iraq into sectarian violence after

the fall of Saddam Hussein: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.<sup>22</sup>

In late 2005, the German magazine *Cicero* published an explosive dossier on al-Zarqawi,<sup>23</sup> based on a leaked German intelligence document that contained hundreds of reports on his activities.<sup>24</sup> The reporting showed that after the invasion of Afghanistan, al-Zarqawi spent crucial months inside Iran rebuilding his network under the protection of the IRGC, the Iranian regime's most loyal servants. Al-Zarqawi traveled under numerous aliases, but some of these were grafted onto real Iranian passports—a possible indication that the Iranians had procured the documents for him. More importantly, *Cicero* explained:

After the war in Afghanistan, Al-Zarqawi [set] up new camps and safe houses in Zahedan, Isfahan, and Tehran. His European followers [went] to Tehran, bringing with them money and new passport identities and collection instructions.

*Cicero's* report was so thorough it even included the phone numbers and addresses al-Zarqawi used while in Iran:

Supported by radical groups within the secret service of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, Al-Zarqawi may safely use the landline number 0098-9112311436. In Isfahan, he uses a telephone with the number 0098-9112300346, which is registered under the name of Ahmad Abdul Salam, Bahar Street, Block No. 27, Kukak Area, Asfahan, Iran. In urgent cases, his followers can reach him under his fax No. 0098-218757638.

Al-Zarqawi is known for his rabid anti-Shiite beliefs. In jihadist circles, he was known as one of the most virulent Salafists, who believed that all Shiites were nothing more than heretical dogs. Yet his hate did not stop him from accepting Iran's help, nor did it stop the mullahs from offering it. As one Jordanian investigator explained

to *Cicero*: “The fact that the two sides hate one another for religious reasons has never prevented them from cooperating very closely.”

The *Cicero* report explained further. “Top of the list of Al-Zarqawi’s sponsors” was “the Islamic Republic of Iran and the hard-liners from the group around the Al-Quds Brigades of the Revolutionary Guards, the Pasdaran.” Germany’s BKA (the Federal Office of Criminal Investigation) verified that Iran “provided Al-Zarqawi with logistical support on the part of the state.” According to the BKA’s files, Iran was an “important logistical basis” for al-Zarqawi and his organization.

At some point, al-Zarqawi was asked to leave Iran. Some counterterrorism analysts and intelligence officials cite this as proof that the Iranians were not supporting him. But by then the damage had been done. His network was rebuilt. Had the Iranians wanted to stop that process they could have arrested al-Zarqawi at any time. After all, they reportedly arrested some of his lower-level associates as a way to placate various Western and Middle Eastern governments that complained about these operatives living in Iran. Instead, the Iranians allowed al-Zarqawi to enter Iraq, where he orchestrated mayhem for years until American forces finally caught up with him.

After 9/11, President Bush declared, “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.” Iran was (and is) with the terrorists. Nothing could have been more vital than tracking down al-Qaeda’s senior leadership. Iran was in a position to help capture them. Instead, Tehran actively assisted their flight from Afghanistan, provided them with safe harbor on Iranian soil, and saved them from justice. These are not the acts of an ally. These are the acts of a nation at war with the United States.

## 9. THE FIGHT AHEAD

*Death to America!*

—The Iranian clerical regime’s long-standing goal, repeatedly chanted at rallies by Iran’s leaders and their supporters

The previous chapters document some of the evidence tying Iran to al-Qaeda. As we have seen, there is a deep well of facts from which to draw. But the consensus inside America today remains that the two have had little or nothing to do with each other. As a result, six years after the September 11 attacks, America still lacks a clear understanding of her terrorist enemies.

All signs indicate that the road ahead will be tough. The “war on terror” is far from over. Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri remain on the run. Al-Qaeda has regrouped and the organization is still capable of executing devastating attacks. In fact, “al-Qaeda central” is back in business on the mountainous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In that area, al-Qaeda’s central leader-



ship faces no imminent threat. In Iraq, al-Qaeda may have been weakened by the death of al-Zarqawi and by the constant pressure from the U.S. military, but the terrorist organization remains capable of mounting deadly attacks against American personnel and Iraqi civilians. Al-Qaeda remains a formidable foe.

What follows are five recommendations to help America defeat al-Qaeda and its Iranian ally.

*Be honest with ourselves about Tehran's war on America.*

When confronted with evidence of Tehran's support for anti-American violence, the reaction of America's diplomatic establishment is to search for excuses. There is no better example than the recent debate concerning Iran's support for the insurgency in Iraq. The media has reported for several years that Iran has supplied Iraqi insurgents with lethal IED (Improvised Explosive Device) technology. The IEDs are a leading cause of American and Iraqi civilian deaths in Iraq, and Iranian provenance for the weapons is a clear act of war.

The reaction by some is to pretend that we do not know whether or not the transfer of these weapons has the explicit endorsement of Iran's senior leaders. American officials leave open the possibility that Iranian-sponsored violence in Iraq is a rogue operation. Even Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has expressed this view: "We know that the Qods Force is involved. We know the Qods Force is a paramilitary arm of the I.R.G.C. So we assume that the leadership of the I.R.G.C. knows about this. Whether or not more senior political leaders in Iran know about, we don't know."<sup>1</sup>

This excuse is not credible. Both the IRGC and the Qods Force have long-served and reported directly to Iran's supreme leader, the Ayatollah. In fact, the IRGC and the Qods Force, along with Hezbollah, have been the regime's chief instruments of terror for decades. The IRGC's extensive dossier of terror is not merely a long-list of rogue operations. The group's acts are a direct reflection of the mullahs' long-standing goal of bringing "Death to America"

and her allies.

At the core of the debate concerning the Iranian IEDs and Iran's other provocations lies a deeply flawed presumption. America's policymakers and diplomats have long assumed that the moderates of Iran can somehow rein in the nation's most radical elements. Thus, even pointing out that the so-called hardliners in Tehran are supporting anti-American violence is believed to weaken the hand of our supposedly moderate allies within Iran. This flawed reasoning not only constrains America's hand today in Iraq, it has consistently allowed Iranian officials to get away with murder.

As Kenneth Pollack explains in *The Persian Puzzle*, the Clinton Administration took this approach to new lengths following the Khobar Towers attack in June 1996. Evidence demonstrating that Iran orchestrated the attack was readily available. Clinton Administration officials debated using force to retaliate, but decided against it. Pollack explains that Iranian president Mohammad Khatami's election in May 1997 "seemed to obviate the need for such retaliation because it appeared that the Iranian government was changing dramatically and for the better. Thus, there is little reason to question the logic that once he was elected the case for retaliation evaporated."<sup>2</sup> The Clinton officials believed that Khatami was a moderate and, therefore, did not want to damage his chances of consolidating power at the expense of his more radical rivals.

This line of thinking led to paralysis. It took the U.S. government five years to lodge criminal indictments against Iranian officials responsible for the murder of American citizens. Moreover, Khatami's election did nothing to constrain the radicals. Khatami himself was not nearly as moderate as many hoped and was fond of leading "Death to America" rallies—personally.<sup>3</sup> None of his purported attempts at reform challenged the mullahs' firm grip on Iran's national security apparatus, including the IRGC and the Qods Force.

With the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005 any pretense of a moderate presidency was clearly demolished. Ahmadinejad's vitriolic, anti-Semitic and anti-American rhetoric serve as a

constant reminder of the hate that fuels Iran's support for terrorism. But America should always keep in mind that the supreme power in Iran remains the Ayatollah Khomeini and the radical mullahs who surround him. It remains to be seen if any genuinely moderate faction in Iran can gain any real power. In the meantime America needs to stop making excuses for Iranian terror.

Should Iran's clerics acquire a nuclear arsenal, they will have also acquired a significant deterrent against future retaliation. There is much debate over whether Iran would ever actually use such weapons against Israel or any other nation, through conventional means or through one of its terrorist proxies. It is often rightly pointed out that such an attack would undoubtedly lead to massive retaliation. Such thinking is rational, but Americans should be wary of assuming that religious fanatics who think America is part of a vast Zionist conspiracy to dominate the world are logical actors. Moreover, Iran would not even need to use her nuclear arsenal in order to shed even more American or Israeli blood. Tehran could easily ramp up terrorist activity even further and, under the threat of nuclear retaliation, ward off any significant reprisals.

In sum, the mullahs of Iran have exported anti-American terrorism around the world for decades. (See the Appendix to this essay.) Yet, America has chosen to look the other way. It is long past time America changed her approach. No matter what solution to the Iranian problem America's leaders choose, it cannot be grounded in the delusions of the past.

*Open a public, Congressional investigation into Iran's and Hezbollah's ties to 9/11 and other al-Qaeda attacks.*

Only late in the 9/11 Commission's investigation did the potential scope of Iran's involvement become clear. As a result, the commissioners called for further investigation into Iran's and Hezbollah's potential involvement in the September 11 attacks. To date, however, the U.S. government has not begun such an investigation. The key issue of state sponsorship for the 9/11 attacks has therefore

been left unresolved.

Given Imad Mugniyah's long history of pioneering anti-American terrorism and clear evidence of his prior relationship with al-Qaeda, particular attention should be paid to the evidence of his role in the attack. That he just happened to be monitoring the travels of al-Qaeda's muscle hijackers en route to their day of terror (even sharing a flight from Saudi Arabia into Beirut with one of them) is certainly "deeply troubling." Given all of the other evidence suggesting Hezbollah's and Iran's coordination of the hijackers' travels it is also a matter of substantial importance.

Six years into the "war on terror," what issue could be more pressing? If Iran played a substantive role in the 9/11 attacks, and America has failed to hold the nation accountable, then what is to stop such a similar attack from happening again in the future? Both Imad Mugniyah and many of al-Qaeda's senior leaders remain on the lam. The potential for them to conspire again remains a dangerous threat.

As the 9/11 commissioners requested, a federal investigation is certainly warranted. But such an investigation should not focus solely on 9/11. As outlined in this essay, there is clear evidence that Iran supported al-Qaeda's August 7, 1998, embassy bombings, the group's most successful act of terror prior to 9/11. There is evidence tying al-Qaeda to Iran's bombing of the Khobar Towers complex as well. And Iran is most certainly complicit in at least several acts of al-Qaeda's terror after 9/11.

All of this should be formally investigated, with the American public able to weigh and consider for itself. Intelligence professionals should no longer be allowed to dismiss all evidence with implausible excuses. In fact, such an investigation should not only focus on the evidence tying Iran to al-Qaeda's terror, it should also focus on the U.S. intelligence community's inept response.

### *Declassify The Evidence.*

As discussed throughout this essay, there is a wealth of publicly

available evidence tying Iran to al-Qaeda's anti-American terrorism. In fact, almost all of the evidence cited in this essay comes from so-called "open sources," including press accounts and published books. The U.S. intelligence community has certainly amassed countless additional pieces of evidence as well. But America's counterterrorism analysts have consistently judged that evidence irrelevant because it does not fit their preconceived notions. Inconvenient facts were and are simply ignored. As we've seen, this was certainly the case after al-Qaeda's August 7, 1998, embassy bombings. Despite the fact that Iran and Hezbollah trained and armed the terrorists responsible for the attack, the U.S. intelligence community and President Clinton's National Security Council decided that there was no meaningful relationship to worry about. Such thinking is not only absurd, it is dangerous.

It is time, therefore, for much of the evidence to be declassified and released to the American public. The American people themselves are capable of weighing and considering the evidence of Iran's complicity in al-Qaeda's terror. In particular, the documents uncovered by the 9/11 Commission in the final days of its investigation should be declassified.

Some within the U.S. intelligence community will no doubt object that declassification runs the risk of exposing highly sensitive sources and methods. But much of the evidence was accumulated long ago. For example, reports of Iran's collusion with al-Qaeda in Sudan dating to the early 1990s are more than decade old. The risk of releasing such evidence is minimal. At a minimum, sufficiently dated material should be declassified. It is certainly possible, too, to mask the identity of more sensitive and recent sources.

*Demand Iran turn over the al-Qaeda fugitives living on Iranian soil.*

Saudi and American intelligence officials have uncovered substantial evidence that several al-Qaeda attacks have been ordered from Iran. Senior al-Qaeda fugitives are currently protected in safe houses guarded by the IRGC and its elite Qods force. Iran has

turned over some, mostly low-level, al-Qaeda figures to their host countries. However, members of al-Qaeda's management team still remain secure on Iranian soil.

Iran has reportedly offered to turn over the al-Qaeda leaders in exchange for members of the MEK (the Mujahadeen al-Khalq or "People's Mujahedin of Iran"), an anti-Iranian terrorist group long supported by Saddam Hussein that operates from Iraq. Members of the MEK are purportedly in American custody, or could readily be captured in Iraq. But the Bush Administration has turned down Iran's offer for an exchange out of fear that it would legitimize the mullahs' actions.

The Bush Administration should take a different approach. The Iranian offer is, most likely, a ruse. Given Tehran's history of cooperation with senior terrorists like Saif al-Adel, al-Qaeda's military chief, it is highly doubtful the mullahs would ever turn him over to American custody. But as long as the Bush Administration rejects the offer out-of-hand, the mullahs can claim that it is America who is refusing to deal. The President should call their bluff. Once Iran turns down the offer, America will then have yet more evidence of Iranian duplicity. At worst, even in the unlikely event that Iran agrees to such an exchange, America would be turning over members of a terrorist organization and the U.S. should never be in the business of protecting terrorists—no matter who they target.

This suggestion is no doubt controversial. But even if American officials do not have the resolve to call out Iran's bluff, the U.S. must demand that Iran turn over the al-Qaeda fugitives immediately, even under threat of force. However, the prospects for using force are limited.

*Devise a realistic strategy for confronting Iran.*

Some critics will no doubt interpret this essay as a call for America to launch an all-out war against Iran. It is not. It is simply a call for America to respond to the acts of war perpetrated by Iran over a span of decades.

An invasion of Iran would most likely be disastrous. America likely has neither the resources nor the will for such an operation. The effectiveness of air strikes also seems dubious. By all accounts, America has a very limited intelligence capability inside Iran today. Destroying targets that would sufficiently degrade Iran's burgeoning nuclear capability would be no easy task. Iran and its allies have spent considerable resources to hide and protect the full scope of the endeavor. So it is not clear that America can identify worthy targets at this point.

Some targets like the IRGC's headquarters or Iran's military infrastructure are readily available. And if America's intelligence services were to have specific intelligence pinpointing the location of senior al-Qaeda leaders, then airstrikes should certainly not be off-limits. Most importantly, if another major terrorist attack on the U.S. is executed and evidence of Iran's hand once again surfaces, then all bets should be off. America simply cannot afford to make any more excuses for Iran.

At the end of the day, military strikes are not nearly as powerful as the potential of the Iranian people. Much like the former captives of the Eastern bloc, there is copious evidence that the Iranian populace yearns for freedom. America should not hesitate to throw her full support—financial or otherwise—behind them. The moderates in the Iranian government have long been marginalized, but young generations of Iranians are much more difficult to contain. Most of them have no love for the clerical regime that oppresses them.

America has launched some limited efforts at funding and supporting their cause. Limited propaganda efforts have also been tried. President Bush has thrown his rhetorical support behind the Iranian people as well. But none of this is enough. A major new initiative to support the Iranian people should be undertaken. And America should not hide her support; it should be clearly communicated policy. A full Cold War-style plan for Iranian containment should also be enacted. Rolling back Iran's influence throughout the Middle East and the world should be a prime objective.

None of the suggestions above are intended to be comprehensive. After all, the purpose of this essay is not to provide all of the answers, but to shed light on the nature of the problem. Six years after 9/11, the identity of our terrorist enemies and their allies remains clouded by erroneous assumptions made by counterterrorism analysts who continually misdiagnose their threat.

America has long had a blind spot when it comes to her terrorist enemies. But the victims of their terror deserve better. America's best, who have fallen in defense of her freedom, deserve better. It is long past the day when America should have dealt with Iran's role in their murder.





## APPENDIX: A TIMELINE OF TERROR

### **November 4, 1979**

Fifty-two American citizens are taken hostage by “students” loyal to Ayatollah Khomeini. They are held for more than a year, until January 20, 1981. The kidnappings are part of the Iranian revolution, which serves as a model for Sunni terrorist groups like Ayman al-Zawahiri’s Egyptian Islamic Jihad.

### **April 18, 1983**

Iran’s master terrorist, Imad Mugniyah, orchestrates the first significant Islamist suicide attack against America: the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. Establishing a modus operandi for terrorists in the years to come, the attacker utilizes a van packed with explosives.

### **October 23, 1983**

Using massive truck bombs, Hezbollah’s suicide bombers simultaneously attack the U.S. Marine Barracks and a housing complex for French Paratroopers in Beirut, Lebanon. Al-Qaeda would later adopt simultaneous suicide bombings as its preferred method for committing attacks.

### **December 12, 1983**

Iranian-backed terrorists bomb the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait. A close relative of Imad Mugniyah is convicted by a Kuwaiti court and sentenced to death for his role in the bombing. Other attackers, also supported by Iran, are imprisoned. The terrorists come to be known as the “Kuwait 17” or “Dawa 17.”

**March 16, 1984**

William Buckley, the CIA's station chief in Beirut, is kidnapped and later tortured-to-death by Imad Mugnyiah's Hezbollah. Buckley's kidnapping is one in a series of Hezbollah's kidnappings from the early 1980s through the early 1990s. Dozens of Americans are kidnapped and Hezbollah frequently demands an exchange for the Kuwait 17. Hezbollah's kidnappings lead to the biggest scandal of President Ronald Reagan's tenure, the Iran-Contra affair, after the Reagan administration agrees to exchange arms for the hostages.

**September 20, 1984**

Hezbollah terrorists strike the U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut with a truck bomb.

**December 3, 1984**

Mugnyiah's operatives hijack Kuwait Airways Flight 221. The hijackers attempt to barter for the release of the Kuwait 17.

**June 14, 1985**

Mugnyiah's terrorists hijack TWA Flight 847. Once again, the hijackers attempt to barter for the release of the Kuwait 17. When the hijackers' demands are denied, they beat and kill a U.S. Navy serviceman, Robert Dean Stethem, who happened to be on the flight. Incredibly, Germany granted parole to one of the hijackers in December 2005.

**1990**

According to Ali Mohamed, a top al-Qaeda operative in U.S. custody, Ayman al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad partners with Iran in a planned coup attempt in Egypt. Tehran trains EIJ terrorists for the coup attempt, which is ultimately aborted. Iran also pays al-Zawahiri \$2 million for sensitive information concerning

the Egyptian Government's plans to raid several islands in the Persian Gulf.

## **1991**

Iran and Sudan, then the world's only Sunni Islamist states, forge a strategic alliance. They begin to jointly export terrorism throughout the world.

### **April 1991**

Hassan al-Turabi hosts the first Popular Arab Islamic Conference in Sudan. The conference provides a forum for disparate forces in the Middle East who oppose American presence in the region to come together. Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Iraqi and Iranian representatives all attend the meeting.

### **February 26, 1993**

Terrorists connected to al-Qaeda and the global terror network bomb the World Trade Center using a rental truck packed with explosives. The bombers' colleagues plot a follow-on attack against landmarks in the NYC area. There is no known evidence that Iran had a hand in these events. It is clear, however, that several of the plotters had ties to Hassan al-Turabi's Sudan. Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, the spiritual leader of the two leading Egyptian terrorist groups (both of which will join al-Qaeda) and who was living in the New York metropolitan area, is later convicted for his involvement in the attacks. Reports surface that he and his organization received financial assistance from Iran.

## **1993**

According to Ali Mohamed, Imad Mugnyiah and Osama bin Laden meet in Sudan. Bin Laden expresses his desire to model al-Qaeda after Hezbollah. In particular, bin Laden expresses interest in Mugnyiah's bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut in 1983

and similar attacks. They agree to work together against America and the West.

### **1993**

According to Jamal al-Fadl, an al-Qaeda operative in U.S. custody, bin Laden meets a leading Iranian sheikh in Sudan. The purpose of the meeting is to put aside any differences between their competing brands of Islam in order to come together against their common enemy: the West. The meeting is just the first of several between bin Laden and Iran's spiritual leaders.

### **1993**

Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps train al-Qaeda's terrorists in camps in Sudan, Lebanon and Iran. Among the terrorists trained are some of bin Laden's most trusted lieutenants and al-Qaeda's future leaders.

### **1993**

Egypt and Algeria cut off diplomatic ties with Iran. Both nations accuse Iran and Sudan of supporting Sunni terrorism, including terrorist groups affiliated with al-Qaeda. Egypt will blame Iran for supporting both the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Group throughout the 1990's.

### **November 13, 1995**

Two bombs are detonated, nearly simultaneously, at the Saudi National Guard training facility in Riyadh, killing five Americans. The suspects are captured and confess to being inspired by Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden denies responsibility, but praises the attack. It is likely al-Qaeda's first terrorist attack inside the Saudi Kingdom.

**November 19, 1995**

An al-Qaeda suicide bomber destroys the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan. The CIA's Bob Baer later learns that Mugniyah's deputy assisted al-Qaeda in the attack and that one of bin Laden's top terrorists remained in contact with Mugniyah's office months afterwards.

**May 1996**

Bin Laden is expelled from Sudan, but the 9/11 Commission reports that "intelligence indicates the persistence of contacts" between al-Qaeda and Iran even after al-Qaeda's relocation to Afghanistan. Bin Laden and al-Qaeda maintain an ongoing presence in Sudan, despite not being "formally" welcome.

**June 21 - 23, 1996**

Tehran hosts a summit for the leading Sunni and Shiite terrorist groups. It is announced that the terrorists will continue to focus on U.S. interests throughout the region. Mugniyah, bin Laden, and a leading member of the EIJ reportedly forge the "Committee of Three," under the leadership of Iran's intelligence chief, to focus their joint efforts against American targets.

**June 25, 1996**

Hezbollah terrorists, operating under the direction of senior Iranian officials, bomb the Khobar Towers apartment complex in Saudi Arabia. Contemporaneous reports by both the State Department and the CIA note that al-Qaeda is also suspected of playing a role. The 9/11 Commission would later find "indirect evidence" of al-Qaeda's involvement. The evidence includes intelligence indicating that al-Qaeda was planning a similar operation in the months prior and that bin Laden was congratulated by other al-Qaeda operatives, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, shortly after the attack.

**July 1996**

According to Bob Baer, the Egyptian Islamic Group—an ally of bin Laden's al-Qaeda—is in contact with Mugnyiah.

**1996**

According to Bob Baer, there is “incontrovertible evidence” of a meeting between bin Laden and a representative of the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS).

**August 7, 1998**

Al-Qaeda's suicide bombers simultaneously destroy the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. It is al-Qaeda's most spectacular attack prior to 9/11. The attack is clearly modeled on Hezbollah's attacks in the early 1980s. Indeed, the al-Qaeda terrorists responsible were trained by Hezbollah in the early 1990s. There is evidence that Iran also provided explosives used in the attack.

**October - November 2000**

Imad Mugnyiah and his lieutenants personally escort several of the 9/11 muscle hijackers out of Saudi Arabia on flights to Beirut and Iran. In all, eight to ten of the hijackers travel through Iran on the way to 9/11.

**December 2000**

Ramzi Binalshibh, al-Qaeda's key point man for the 9/11 plot, applies for visa at the Iranian Embassy in Berlin. His visa application is approved.

**January 31, 2001**

Ramzi Binalshibh arrives at Tehran International airport. He does not return to Germany until February 28, 2001. The purpose of his trip to Iran remains a mystery. The 9/11 Commission does not mention Binalshibh's trip to Iran.

**Early September 2001**

Binalshibh flees to Iran shortly before the 9/11 attacks.

**September 11, 2001**

Nineteen al-Qaeda hijackers execute al-Qaeda's largest operation to date, killing nearly 3000 Americans. Many of the details surrounding the plot, including who financed the attack, remain a mystery.

**October 2001**

According to a high-level Taliban detainee at Gitmo, Iran offers the Taliban Government assistance in retreating from Afghanistan.

**October 2001**

Numerous press reports indicate that Iran aids the retreat of hundreds of al-Qaeda and Taliban members from Afghanistan. Some al-Qaeda operatives enjoy safehaven in Iran to this day. Among them is Said al-Adel, who is reportedly the third highest ranking member of al-Qaeda and was trained by Hezbollah during the early 1990s, and Saad bin Laden, Osama's heir apparent.

**April 11, 2002**

Al-Qaeda carries out the first attack ordered by bin Laden since 9/11: a suicide bomber destroys a synagogue in Tunisia, killing nineteen people. According to NBC News, Saad bin Laden contacted the cell responsible for the attack from his safehaven in Iran. Suleiman Abu Ghaith, bin Laden's spokesman, also claims al-Qaeda's responsibility for the attack from his abode in Iran.

**End of 2002 - Spring 2003**

According to former Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet, senior al-Qaeda leaders discuss the acquisition of nuclear weapons from their safe haven in Iran. In fact, al-Qaeda's "nuclear



chief,” Abdel al-Aziz al-Masri, is one of many senior terrorists living in Iran.

**May 12, 2003**

Under orders from Saif al-Adel and Saad bin Laden, who are operating from Iran, al-Qaeda's terrorists simultaneously strike three separate housing complexes in Riyadh Saudi Arabia. Another al-Qaeda agent thought to be responsible for the attack flees to Iran before he can be captured.

**May 16, 2003**

One dozen al-Qaeda bombers attack several targets in Casablanca, Morocco. Saad bin Laden, living in Iran, is reportedly in contact with the cell shortly before the attack.

**2004 – present**

Iran supplies advanced IED technology to the insurgents in Iraq. There is growing evidence of Iranian support for both Sunni and Shiite insurgency groups in Iraq. Iran continues to harbor senior al-Qaeda leaders as the terrorist network reorganizes.

**January 20, 2007**

IRGC and Hezbollah terrorists kill five American soldiers in Karbala, Iraq

**January 2007 – present**

Numerous IRGC and Hezbollah terrorists, who are responsible for arming and training terrorist groups in Iraq, are captured by American and Iraqi forces.



## NOTES

### Chapter 1: Blind Spot

<sup>1</sup> 9/11 Commission, Staff Statement No. 15, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Edward J. Epstein, "Fictoid #3: The Lair of Bin Ladin," [http://www.edwardjayepstein.com/nether\\_fictoid3.htm](http://www.edwardjayepstein.com/nether_fictoid3.htm).

<sup>3</sup> Former deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage has described Hezbollah as terrorism's "A-team" while labeling al Qaeda as the "B-team." See, for example, this excerpt from CBS's 60 Minutes, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/04/18/60minutes/main550000.shtml>.

<sup>4</sup> Lisa Beyer, "Why the Middle East Crisis Isn't Really About Terrorism," July 31, 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1220505,00.html>

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2003), p. 413.

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, p. 459.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), p. xii.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle* (New York: Random House, 2004), p. 379.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Clarke and Steven Simon, “Bombs That Would Backfire,” *The New York Times*, April 16, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, pp. 298-9.

<sup>11</sup> Iran’s terrorist partner, Syria, has also played a vital role in supporting Hezbollah’s terrorist activities. But Iran is the “senior partner” in this relationship.

## Chapter 2: Outside the Box

<sup>1</sup> A translation of Zawahiri’s videotaped speech was released by the SITE Institute on its web site on February 12, 2007: <http://siteinstitute.org/bin/articles.cgi?ID=publications252307&Category=publications&Subcategory=0>.

<sup>2</sup> A brief explanation of the difference between Sunni and Shiite Muslims is in order. In general, Sunni Muslims believe that the heirs of the first four caliphs after Mohammed are Islam’s legitimate rulers. The caliphs’ heirs ruled until the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire following World War I. The mission of the most radical Sunni extremists is to return the caliphs’ heirs to their rightful throne by re-establishing the Ottoman Empire. To do so, they must first overthrow secular and pro-Western regimes such as Hosni Mubarak’s in Egypt. In contrast, Shiite Muslims believe that only the descendants of the fourth caliph following Mohammed—Ali—are Islam’s rightful rulers. Other disagreements have emerged over the centuries as well.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Ledeen has made this suggestion many times throughout his writings. See, for example, “The Latest Horrors,” National Review Online, September 2, 2003. See also, *The War Against The Terror Masters* (New York: Truman Talley Books, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth R. Timmerman, "Iran Cosponsors Al-Qaeda Terrorism," *Insight Magazine*, December 3, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> In recent years, Iran has also joined forces with Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, an avowed secular socialist. The two nations cooperate on a range of matters. See, for example, Thomas Joscelyn, "Mullah Chavez," *WeeklyStandard.com*, October 20, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the Muslim Brotherhood's ties to al-Qaeda see, John Mintz and Douglas Farah, "In Search of Friends Among The Foes," *The Washington Post*, September 11, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Walid M. Abdelnasser, "Islamic organizations in Egypt and the Iranian revolution of 1979: the experience of the first few years," *Arab Studies Quarterly* (ASQ), Spring 1997.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), p. 174. Wright says that this information regarding Zawahiri's ties to Iran came from Ali Mohamed during his questioning by the FBI.

<sup>11</sup> Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin, *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 83-5.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Levitt, "Sponsoring Terrorism: Syria and Islamic Jihad," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 4 No. 11-12, November-December 2002; Ely Karmon, "The U.S. Indictment of Palestinian Islamic Jihad Militants: The Iranian Connection," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, Policy Watch #718, March 3, 2003; Joshua Mitnick, "Islamic Jihad steps out from Hamas shadow," *The Christian Science Monitor*, October

28, 2005. Iran's financial support for Palestinian Islamic Jihad has also been recognized by the U.S. court system. At the sentencing hearing for Sami al-Arian, a former university professor in Florida who was convicted of being a PIJ leader, Judge James S. Moody, Jr. bluntly refers to Iran as the "major funding source of the PIJ." (A transcript of the hearing is available at counterterrorism expert Steve Emerson's web site: [http://www.investigativeproject.org/al-Arian\\_sentencing.html](http://www.investigativeproject.org/al-Arian_sentencing.html)).

<sup>13</sup> Iran's training and funding of Hamas has been discussed extensively by counterterrorism expert Matthew Levitt. See, for example, Matthew Levitt, *Hamas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 46, 50, 116, 172-178. Levitt also discusses Iraqi and Saudi support for Hamas. See *Hamas*, pp. 178-181, 188-194. For more on Iran's sponsorship of Hamas, see also, Khaled Hroub, *Hamas* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000), pp. 176-180.

<sup>14</sup> Scott Wilson, "Iranian Leader Praises Hamas," *The Washington Post*, February 21, 2006.

### Chapter 3: Melting Pot of Terror

<sup>1</sup> The analysis in this section focuses on al-Turabi's role in bringing together Iran and al-Qaeda. A similar analysis applies to al-Turabi's role in bringing together Saddam's Iraq and al-Qaeda. See, for example, Thomas Joscelyn, "The Pope of Terrorism," Parts I and II, *WeeklyStandard.com*, July 25 and 26, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> For a review of the Muslim Brotherhood's expansion into Europe, see Lorenzo Vidino, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Conquest of Europe," *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Ami Ayalon, ed., *Middle East Contemporary Survey: 1993*, Volume: 17, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1995, p. 142.

<sup>4</sup> Judith Miller, "A Muslim Cleric Hones the Fusing of Religion and Politics," *The New York Times*, May 17, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Jane Perlez, "A Fundamentalist Finds a Fulcrum in Sudan," *The New York Times*, January 29, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Judith Miller, "The Challenge of Radical Islam," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1993, Volume 72, Number 2.

<sup>7</sup> For al-Turabi, the first priority was confronting the West and driving American forces out of the Middle East. The ideological differences that seemed insurmountable to some analysts in the West were non-existent in al-Turabi's mind. In a lecture he gave in Madrid in the summer of 1994, he put it bluntly: "I'm not going to talk in terms of Sunni and Shia, I think this is only part of history, it's not itself part of Islam. I don't belong to any sect and most fundamentalists don't." He reiterated:

Modern Islamic movements don't believe in schools of jurisprudence, they don't define themselves as Shia, or Sunna, or of this Sufi order or that Sufi order. They recognise this as quite a heritage and they can learn a lot from such history. They don't want to break with history altogether, but they want to go forward and develop.

See "Islamic Fundamentalism in the Sunni and Shia Worlds," Lecture by Hassan al-Turabi delivered in Madrid on August 2, 1994, found online at: <http://www.islamfortoday.com/turabi02.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Miller, "The Challenge of Radical Islam."

<sup>9</sup> See the State Department's *Patterns of Global Terrorism* for 1993, 1994, and 1995. The reports can be found online at: [http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/terror\\_93/index.html](http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/terror_93/index.html), [http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/terror\\_94/index.html](http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/terror_94/index.html), and [http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/terror\\_95/](http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/terror_95/).

<sup>10</sup> State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> The precise author of these early terrorist conspiracies remains a mystery. It is clear, however, that there were numerous ties between the plotters and Turabi's Sudan. See, for example, Andrew McCarthy, "The Sudan Connection; The Missing Link in U.S. Terrorism Policy," *The Weekly Standard*, November 2, 1998. See also, Steven Emerson, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us* (New York: Free Press, 2002), pp. 142-143. In 1993, the Clinton Administration also added Sudan to the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism. A few years later, two Sudanese diplomats working at the U.N. were deported because of their ties to the plotters. In the investigations into both the first World Trade Center bombing and the follow-on landmarks plot, it became evident that many of those involved were followers of Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the spiritual leader of the Islamic Group. Rahman was eventually convicted for his involvement and remains in prison. As described in this essay, Egypt accused Iran of supporting the Islamic Group's terrorist operations inside Egypt. Evidence that Iran was funding Rahman while he was in the U.S. also surfaced. See, "Iran Is Said to Give Money to Abdel Rahman," *The New York Times*, April 11, 1993. Evidence of Iranian involvement in the World Trade Center bombing apparently arose during the interrogations of one of the suspects, Mahmud Abouhalima. Abouhalima fled the U.S. shortly after the attack, but was detained by Egyptian authorities. During his interrogation, Abouhalima reportedly implicated Iranian intelligence officials in the plot. See, Chris Hedges, "Egyptian



Says Confession Links Iran to Bombing of Trade Center,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 1993. Still other evidence points to possible Iraqi complicity. More than a decade after the attack, many of the details of these plots remain unknown.

<sup>12</sup> Perlez, “A Fundamentalist Finds a Fulcrum in Sudan.”

<sup>13</sup> Steven A. Holmes, “Iran’s Shadow; Fundamentalism Alters the Mideast’s Power Relationships,” *The New York Times*, August 22, 1993.

<sup>14</sup> Youssef M. Ibrahim, “Specter of Terror, A Nation’s Growing Role as Staging Ground for Islamic Extremists,” *The New York Times*, June 26, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of State, April 1994, *Patterns of Global Terrorism, 1993*.

<sup>17</sup> Steven Emerson, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us* (New York: The Free Press, 2002), p. 146.

<sup>18</sup> Part of the reason for the resurgence of Egyptian terrorism was the end of the jihad in Afghanistan. After the Soviet retreat, many of the Egyptian radicals who had joined the Afghani insurgency returned to their homes in Egypt. Their return swelled the IG’s and the EIJ’s ranks.

<sup>19</sup> Douglas Jehl, “Egypt Warns C.I.A. Chief on Iran-Backed Terror,” *The New York Times*, April 18, 1993.

<sup>20</sup> The State Department’s annual *Patterns of Global Terrorism* (<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2000/>) has repeatedly published Egypt’s well-backed allegations. For example, State’s

2000 report explains: “The Egyptian Government believes that Iran, Bin Laden, and Afghan militant groups support” the Islamic Group. Similarly, “The Egyptian Government claims that both Iran and Bin Ladin support the” Egyptian Islamic Jihad.

<sup>21</sup> For example, the State Department’s 2000 *Patterns of Global Terrorism* notes that “the Algerian Government has accused Iran and Sudan of supporting Algerian extremists.” Similar language can be found throughout the State Department’s reports in the 1990s.

<sup>22</sup> Indictment in *United States of America v. Usama bin Laden et al.*, p. 3, paragraph 4. The indictment can be accessed at: <http://www.fas.org/irp/news/1998/11/indict1.pdf>. The indictment also states that bin Laden and “other ranking members of Al Qaeda stated privately to other members of Al Qaeda that Al Qaeda should put aside its differences with Shiite Muslim terrorist organizations, including the Government of Iran and its affiliated terrorist group Hezbollah, to cooperate against the perceived common enemy, the United States and its allies.” See paragraph 8 h on page 6 of the indictment.

#### **Chapter 4: A Match Made in Hell**

<sup>1</sup> National Geographic Channel documentary, *Triple Cross*. Information about the documentary, including air times, can be found online at: <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/triplecross/showDescription.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda* (New York: Berkley Books, 2002), p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 61. The 9/11 Commission's final report can be accessed online at: <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/index.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Robert Baer, *See No Evil* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002), p. 266.

<sup>7</sup> Gerald Posner, *Why America Slept: The Failure To Prevent 9/11* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), p. 118.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.

## **Chapter 5: Khobar Towers: A Joint Operation?**

<sup>1</sup> The full text of bin Laden's fatwa can be found online at: [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa\\_1996.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html).

<sup>2</sup> CIA, "Iranian Surveillance of US Persons and Facilities in 1995," January 1, 1996. The report was released in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request on November 13, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> President Clinton's FBI Director Louis Freeh has been very critical of the Clinton Administration's handling of the Khobar investigation. See, for example, Freeh's piece for the *Wall Street Journal*, "Remember Khobar Towers" which was posted on the WSJ's OpinionJournal.com on May 20, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> James Risken, "Terrorism Panel Faults U.S. Effort on Iran and 1996 Bombing," *The New York Times*, June 4, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> The indictment of the Khobar conspirators can be found at: <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel01/khobar.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Windrem, "Al-Qaida finds safe haven in Iran," MSNBC.com (NBC News), June 24, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, p. 282.

<sup>8</sup> "Osama Bin Laden v. the U.S.: Edicts and Statements," accessed at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/who/edicts.html>.

<sup>9</sup> State Department, "Terrorism/Usama bin Ladin: Who's Chasing Whom?," July 18, 1996. The report can be accessed online at: <http://www.judicialwatch.org/archive/2005/Usama.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 468, footnote 48 to Chapter 2.

<sup>11</sup> Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, p. 324-325.

<sup>12</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence Wright, "The Man Behind Bin Laden," *The New Yorker*, September 9, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> John Tagliabue and Raymond Bonner, "A Nation Challenged: German Intelligence; German Data Led U.S. to Search For More Suicide Hijacker Teams," *The New York Times*, September 29, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/pubs/fs/5902.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 240.

<sup>17</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>18</sup> James Risen, "Bin Laden Sought Iran as an Ally, U.S. Intelligence Documents Say," *The New York Times*, December 31, 2001.

## **Chapter 6: Mugniyah's Fingerprints: The 1998 Embassy Bombings**

<sup>1</sup> Jane Perlez, "After the Attacks: In the Sudan; For This Islamic Tactician, Battle With U.S. Has Begun," *The New York Times*, August 24, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> The indictment can be accessed at: <http://www.fas.org/irp/news/1998/11/indict2.pdf>. See pp. 4-5, paragraph 7 for the charges of al-Qaeda's alliance with Hezbollah. The language was the same as that mentioned in the Clinton Administration's earlier indictment of al-Qaeda.

<sup>4</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Al-Adel remains on the FBI's list of most wanted terrorists. He is specifically charged with involvement in the August 7, 1998 embassy bombings. See, <http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorists/teraladel.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Some of the details about al-Adel's diary were discussed during a Gitmo tribunal hearing for 9/11 point man, Ramzi Binalshibh.

See the transcript for Binalshibh's hearing, which was released by the Department of Defense on the web at: [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/transcript\\_ISN10013.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/transcript_ISN10013.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Leela Jacinto, "Is Iran Supporting Al Qaeda?," *ABC News International*, May 22, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, p. 195.

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, p. 263.

## **Chapter 7: See No Evil: Iran and 9/11**

<sup>1</sup> Baer, *See No Evil*, p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton, *Without Precedent: The Inside Story of the 9/11 Commission* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), pp. 249-250.

<sup>3</sup> Baer, *See No Evil*, p. 267.

<sup>4</sup> Baer, *See No Evil*, Preface, xix.

<sup>5</sup> Baer writes: "Did Osama bin Laden act alone, through his own Al Qaeda network, in launching that attacks? About that I'm far more certain and emphatic: no." He then goes on to detail Hezbollah's and Iran's hand in al-Qaeda's rise. *See No Evil*, p. 269.

<sup>6</sup> Baer, *See No Evil*, p. 266.

<sup>7</sup> Baer, *See No Evil*, p. 269.

<sup>8</sup> John Crewdson, "As U.S. steps up investigation, Iran denies assisting Al Qaeda," *Chicago Tribune*, July 21, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Timmerman has written about the 9/11 Commission's last minute discovery and investigation into Iran's al-Qaeda ties extensively. See, for example, Kenneth Timmerman, *Countdown To Crisis* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006), pp. 268 -271. 9/11 Commissioners Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton also discuss the find in *Without Precedent*, pp. 249-250, 293-4, 297.

<sup>10</sup> The report, dated March 10, 2003, is referenced several times in the 9/11 Commission's report. Its full title is "Al-Qaeda in Sudan, 1992-1996: Old School Ties Lead Down Dangerous Paths." See *9/11 Commission Report*, pp. 467-468, 470.

<sup>11</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 240.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Kenneth Timmerman, *Countdown to Crisis*, p. 270.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Jay Epstein, "Behind the 9/11 Report," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 18, 2006. See also Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, *Without Precedent*, p. 294.

<sup>14</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 241.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 161.

<sup>17</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 166.

<sup>18</sup> The *9/11 Commission Report* notes that "U.S. authorities have not uncovered evidence" of anyone else meeting with Atta and Binalshibh in Spain in July 2001. Spanish authorities, as the 9/11 Commission notes in a footnote, would beg to differ. See *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 530, footnote 145.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenball, "More Evidence of an Iran-Al Qaeda Connection," *Newsweek*, July 23, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Crewdson, "As U.S. steps up investigation, Iran denies assisting Al Qaeda."

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter 8: Al-Qaeda's Great Escape

<sup>1</sup> Amin Tarzi and Kathleen Ridolfo, "Afghanistan/Iraq: Al-Zarqawi, Al-Qaeda, And The New Islamist Front," Radio Free Europe/Radio Free Liberty, June 10, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Windrem, "Al-Qaida finds safe haven in Iran," NBC News, as reported on MSNBC.com, June 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Pillar, a former CIA analyst, summarized the conventional wisdom in this regard when he wrote: "Tehran has announced the arrest of some al-Qaida operatives; its refusal to hand them over to the United States clearly is a bargaining ploy intended to gain Iranian custody of members of the anti-Tehran terrorist group Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK)." See Pillar's *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2001, paperback edition with new introduction, 2003), p. xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Bill Roggio, "Pakistan Surrenders," *The Weekly Standard*, Volume 12, Issue 3, October 2, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Windrem, "Al-Qaida finds safe haven in Iran."

<sup>6</sup> Julian West and Christina Lamb, "Iranian officials in secret Taliban talks," *The London Telegraph*, November 3, 2001.



<sup>7</sup> The Iranian city of Mashad had long been a transit hub for al Qaeda's operatives. The author's review of thousands of pages of documents generated during the tribunal sessions of al-Qaeda detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba revealed that numerous al-Qaeda terrorists transited through Mashad to and from Afghanistan and other points in Iran. According to journalist Ken Timmerman, the U.S. intelligence community has accumulated ample evidence that Iran was running this "rat line." See, for example, Kenneth Timmerman, "The rat line," *The Washington Times*, June 27, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Tim McGirk, "Did Iran Help al Qaeda Escape?," *Time* magazine, February 2, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Joscelyn, "Unholy Alliance," *WeeklyStandard.com*, March 8, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> The United Nation's list of Taliban officials can be found at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2001/afg131.doc.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Dana Priest and Douglas Farah, "Iranian Force Has Long Ties to Al Qaeda," *The Washington Post*, October 14, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> See the section "Melting Pot of Terror" for more on the IRGC's time in Sudan and the relationship with al-Qaeda.

<sup>13</sup> Priest and Farah, "Iranian Force Has Long Ties to Al Qaeda."

<sup>14</sup> Windrem, NBC News, "Al-Qaida finds safe haven in Iran."

<sup>15</sup> "Key Riyadh bombings suspect gives up," CNN.com, June 27, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Douglas Farah and Dana Priest, "Bin Laden Son Plays Key Role in Al Qaeda," *The Washington Post*, October 14, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> “Key Riyadh bombings suspect gives up,” CNN.com.

<sup>18</sup> Farah and Priest, “Bin Laden Son Plays Key Role in Al Qaeda.”

<sup>19</sup> George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), p. 272.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies* (New York: Free Press, 2004), p. 270.

<sup>21</sup> Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, p. 284. Because of its ties to al-Qaeda, Clarke lists Iran as one of the four most important countries for the U.S. to address in the post 9/11 “war on terror.” It should be noted that Mr. Clarke’s concession that there was a noteworthy relationship between Iran and al-Qaeda is substantially at odds with the work of other former Clinton National Security Council officials, including his own subordinates. For example, Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, who worked for Richard Clarke, still insist that there is little evidence tying Iran to al-Qaeda. (See quotes from *The Age of Sacred Terror* cited above.) Then again, Mr. Clarke’s own testimony on the subject has been uneven. At times, such as when he was writing *Against All Enemies*, he was willing to concede there was a relationship between the two. Other times, like during a vital national debate about whether or not America should respond militarily to Iran’s provocations, he claims that only American attacks against Iran could drive the two together. (See Richard Clarke and Steven Simon, “Bombs That Would Backfire,” *The New York Times*, April 16, 2006.) Such is the state of affairs inside America’s counterterrorism circles. Depending on the political landscape of the day, “expert” opinions are malleable.

<sup>22</sup> A number of myths still surround Zarqawi’s barbaric life. It is widely believed, for example, that he had nothing to do with Saddam’s regime and received no support from Iraq prior to the

U.S.-led invasion. But in addition to the support he received from Iran, Zarqawi was also quite clearly supported by Saddam's intelligence apparatus. See, for example, Thomas Joscelyn, "Spinning Zarqawi," *WeeklyStandard.com*, June 15, 2006. The *Cicero* report, referenced below in footnote 23, also details a number of ties between Zarqawi and the Iraqi intelligence service. For example, a Jordanian intelligence officer explained that at the time Zarqawi was "using Saddam Husayn's secret service structures today," because he "knows them from the past." A number of other details are provided as well. In addition, the myth that Zarqawi was not really an al-Qaeda agent has grown. Despite the fact that he was al-Qaeda's "emir" in Iraq, some analysts pretend that he was not closely affiliated with al-Qaeda prior to the Iraq war. Again, this is demonstrably false. Zarqawi had an extensive history of cooperating with al-Qaeda prior to the Iraq war. He even planned attacks in Jordan at the turn of the millennium with senior al-Qaeda officers.

<sup>23</sup> Bruno Schirra, "How Dangerous Is Iran?," *Cicero*, October 27, 2005. For a discussion of the *Cicero* article, see, Dan Darling, "The Cicero Article," *WeeklyStandard.com*, November 10, 2005. A translation of the full text of the *Cicero* report is also available online at: [http://www.windsofchange.net/archives/full\\_text\\_of\\_the\\_cicero\\_article\\_on\\_iran-print.php](http://www.windsofchange.net/archives/full_text_of_the_cicero_article_on_iran-print.php).

<sup>24</sup> Italy turned up evidence of Iran's support for Zarqawi as well. See Michael Ledeen, *The War Against The Terror Masters*, pp. 264-268.

## Chapter 9: The Fight Ahead

<sup>1</sup> Scott Shane, “Iranian Force, Focus of U.S., Still a Mystery,” *The New York Times*, February 17, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, p. 298. Pollack adds that he believes “it would have been much better for America’s deterrent posture in general, and specifically with regard to Iran, if the U.S. government could have found a way to have mounted a major retaliation against Iran for the Khobar Towers bombing.”

<sup>3</sup> Scott Peterson, “In Iran, ‘Death to America’ is back,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 12, 2002.